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THREE COMEDIES

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LONDON, NEW YORK, BOMBAY, AND CALCUTTA

THREE COMEDIES

BY

LUDVIG HOLBERG

BARON HOLBERG

TRANSLATED FROM THE DANISH BY

LIEUT.-COLONEL H. W. L. HIME

(LATE) ROYAL ARTILLERY

LONGMANS, GREEN AND CO.

39 PATERNOSTER ROW, LONDON

NEW YORK, BOMBAY, AND CALCUTTA

1912

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PREFACE

IN the following translations Holberg's meaning is given to the best of the translator's ability, without tenacious adherence to phrases or punctilious attention to words. A translator, like other persons, may be over-righteous.

Holberg was born in Bergen in 1684, eleven years after the death of Molière, and seven years after the birth of George Farquhar, the youngest of the so-called "Comic Dramatists of the Restoration," and he died in Copenhagen in 1754. He was a man of comprehensive intellect, and wrote several valuable and laborious works in addition to his thirty-three comedies. The edition of his comedies referred to in this book is *Holbergs Komedier, udgivne af Julius Martensen*, in 13 vols., Ernst Bojesen, Copenhagen, 1897.

In the preface which he wrote (in French) to Fursman's French translation of some of his plays Holberg, explains briefly his views on comedy (xii. 256). He wished, he says, to revive the taste for Plautus and Molière, whom he took for his guides; and he followed them even in their irregularities—that is, their frequent disregard for the unities of

PREFACE

place and time. No play, he thinks, deserves the name of comedy unless it has a well-connected (*bien liée*) plot and striking catastrophe, and unless it is quickened by what the ancients called *festivité*, which is the soul of the theatre.

In the great majority of his plays Holberg has successfully carried out these views; but in more than one case he had "second thoughts," which were far from being "the best," and he injured some of his plays by altering them to fit more closely to "the rules." Herr Martensen mentions the fifth act of the altered play *Barselstuen* as "a curious example of how Holberg could injure his comedies in order to make them more conformable to the rules" (i. 35). It is difficult to explain these afterthoughts in the case of a man so well acquainted with Molière and the protest against the rules uttered by Uranie in the *Critique de l'École des Femmes*, sc. 6 : *Quand je vois une comédie, je regarde seulement si les choses me touchent ; et lorsque je m'y suis bien divertie, je ne vais point demander si j'ai eu tort, et si les règles d'Aristote me défendraient de rire.* In a few of his latest plays, too, he has allowed himself to be led astray by the principle of Horace :—

Omne tulit punctum, qui miscuit utile dulci.

The *utile* is as praiseworthy in comedy as in other subjects, but it should be left to take care of itself. "I do not object to a dramatic poet having a moral influence in view," said Goethe (*Eckermann's Con-*

PREFACE

versations, &c., p. 228), "but when the point is to bring his subject clearly and effectively before his audience, his moral purpose proves of little use, and he needs much more a faculty for delineation and a familiarity with the stage to know what to do and what to leave undone. If there be a moral in the subject, it will appear, and the poet has nothing to consider but the effective and artistic treatment of his subject. If a poet has as high a soul as Sophocles, his influence will always be moral, let him do what he will."

Holberg was aware that his comedies were not in accordance with the French taste of the period in which he wrote, and he explains why he deliberately avoided the French style. To write such pieces, he says, is no more than to write brilliant dialogues *qui n'ont aucune ressemblance aux Pièces de Théâtre*. Holberg thus set his face against that undue domination of wit, however brilliant, over action, plot, and dramatic propriety, which was exemplified on the English stage in the plays of Wycherley, Congreve, and Vanbrugh. Holberg wrote first of all as a dramatist, not as a man of letters. This is made clear by his defence against the charge that some of his characters were overcoloured. They are overcoloured, he says in effect, and they must be overcoloured, because they are meant for the stage. *C'est de propos délibéré que j'ai quelquefois chargé les couleurs et outré les peintures, l'expérience m'ayant appris que la justesse demandée par les Académiciens,*

PREFACE

qui ne sont pas toujours juges compétens dans ce genre d'écrire, gâte souvent une comédie et la rend languissante. Mr. Grimarest a justifié Molière d'un semblable reproche, en disant qu'il connoissoit le point de vue de Théâtre qui demande de gros traits pour affecter le public (xii. 261). Holberg is free from the fault of writing dialogue merely for the display of wit, and he is also free from another and hateful fault of the comedy of his day—its foulness. To pass from Wycherley or Congreve to Holberg is to pass from the fetid atmosphere of the Divorce Court or the Old Bailey to the pure air of the Norwegian fiords. Holberg is seldom coarse, and never immoral.

Three of his most amusing, though not, perhaps, of his best, comedies are offered here to the public. Wider acquaintance with his works would strengthen and confirm the favourable opinion of him which some readers, at least, will form from the present selection. A careful study of the whole body of his plays leads irresistibly to the conclusion that Holberg ranks among the great masters of comedy.

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I

HENRY AND PERNILLA

A Comedy in Three Acts

FIRST PERFORMANCE

1724

PC

A

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

LEANDER, *a rich young Count*

HENRY, *Leander's valet*

ARV, *Leander's farm servant*

{ JERONIMUS, *a gentleman*

LEONORA, *his daughter, engaged to Leander*

PERNILLA, *Leonora's lady's-maid*

MAGDALEN, *an old woman*

LEONARD, *a friend of Leander and Jeronimus*

A NOTARY

SCENE

COPENHAGEN

HENRY AND PERNILLA

ACT I

SCENE 1

HENRY (*as a gentleman in his master's clothes*).

HENRY. Ha, ha, ha, ha ! The affair goes swimmingly ; she's fairly caught ! Lord ! what cannot the scurvy clothes do ! I only meant to have a flutter in my master's clothes and carriage, and I never dreamt, my word, that they were going to make my fortune. But now I am on the road to be made " a gentleman in spite of myself," just as the charcoal-burner in some play was made a " doctor in spite of himself." ¹ I fear I shall be henpecked, for this young lady is a thorough flirt ; but what does that matter ? I shall rise from a menial to be a henpecked celebrity. It is certain that success depends on my displaying good manners and getting rid of valet's tricks which would betray me at once. No later than yesterday I made a confounded blunder. I ordered the new servants I hired by the Count's orders to bring round the carriage, and

¹ Sganarelle in Molière's *Le Médecin malgré Lui*.

when I came out, quite forgetting that I am the Count, I jumped up behind. The strange coachman smiled, and said, "*There*, my lord!" and I felt quite ashamed of myself. But I got out of the mess by saying I thought I saw a defect in the roof of the carriage. Yesterday I went alone to the Assembly to pick up some fashionable airs and graces. There I saw a nobleman just returned from France, and I imitated him to a hair except the speaking through the nose; but I stole from him all his other gestures and grimaces, for example—

[He takes out his watch and whistles, moves about the stage with dancing steps and sings, takes his eyeglass from his pocket, and adjusts his peruke.]

I am pleased with myself; I am delighted with myself. A certain young lady is right, *par Dieu!*

SCENE 2

ARV. HENRY.

ARV (*to himself*). What sort of mortal is this? Is he right in his head?

HENRY (*to himself*). Who the deuce is this? Arv, by Jove! who comes from the Count in the country.

ARV (*to himself*). If a fellow were to give himself such airs in the country, the village magistrate would declare him to be mad, until he was acquitted

by the other court in the market town where half-witted folk are allowed to run wild.

HENRY (*to himself*). I shall have to tell him who I am, but I'll have a game with him first. (*To ARV.*) Hey ! who are you who talks there ?

ARV. It is me.

HENRY. Which me ? What kind of answer is that ?

ARV. It is me, Arv.

HENRY. You must be a fool, as I can judge from your name. *Diable m'emporte, partout dans la France comment vous portez vous.* Do you hear what I say ? Do you understand French ?

ARV. No, I do not.

HENRY. Italian ?

ARV. No.

HENRY. Spanish ?

ARV. No.

HENRY. Then you are worse than the beasts of the field.

ARV. I understand none of them, honest sir.

HENRY. Honest sir ! For whom do you take me, wretch ? I am not honest, but noble. When you talk with your fellow-servants, you can say, honest man.

ARV. Forgive me, noble sir ; I knew not that you were other than honest.

HENRY. No, that word is unsuitable for persons of my position. Where do you live ?

ARV. I serve a young Count called Leander.

HENRY. Leander ! How did the lout come by that name ? My name is Leander.

ARV. Then are you, noble sir, also a lout ?

HENRY. Do you know what a lout is ?

ARV. I suppose it must be something grand, for you say that my master and yourself are louts.

HENRY. It is lucky for you you don't know. But how did your master dare to assume the name of Leander ? If I could get hold of him, I would know the reason why. But I shall settle my reckoning with you first. *[Draws his sword.]*

ARV *(kneeling)*. Ah, noble Lord Lout ! spare my life ! I am only a farm-servant. But I'll put you on to the Count's valet, who is here in the town, and you can take better revenge on him.

HENRY. Where is he ? and what is his name ?

ARV. He is called Henry, but he ought to be called Rascal ; for he is one of the greatest blackguards I ever knew.

HENRY. Ha, ha, ha ! I am done now. Stand up, Arv ; don't you know me ? I am the Henry you praise so highly.

ARV *(rising)*. Curse you ! You ought to be ashamed of playing such villainous tricks on your fellow-servants !

HENRY. And you ought to be ashamed of slandering your fellow-servants !

ARV. Your goings on prove I said no wrong. Why the devil are you running amuck in the master's clothes ?

HENRY. Arv, you are a poor man, and earn only ten rixdollars a year——

ARV. Ten fiddlesticks a year !

HENRY. But if you are civil, and give me a leg up, you may earn fifty rixdollars this afternoon.

ARV. Where the dickens will you find fifty rixdollars, unless you steal them ?

HENRY. When you hear the story, you will know where. You know the Count sent me here a fortnight since to put things in order and engage two footmen and a coachman, so that everything might be ready for his wedding ?

ARV. I know all that. But who is the bride to be ?

HENRY. I know no more about her than you do. The only one who knew was Christopher, the second valet, who was travelling with the Count when he got engaged. The instant the Count returned home he said to me, "I shall be married in town in a fortnight, and you must start at once for Copenhagen to arrange things there and engage a carriage, horses, and coachman, and two footmen. Christopher was not satisfactory, and I have got rid of him." I bowed ; and when I asked, "Who is to be the bride, sir ?" he smiled, and said, "You will find that out soon enough. Go now, at once, and do what I told you." I came away then. After I got here, I engaged the carriage and footmen, and I have arranged everything to please him. But while I was about the Count's affairs, all of a sudden

it came into my head to dress up like a real gentleman.

ARV. What infernal nonsense !

HENRY. You may well say that. Anyhow, I frisked about in the carriage every day, with the two footmen behind me, and the Count's best clothes on my back. But all I wanted to do was to satisfy my longing and feel what it was like to be a great person.

ARV. And how did the new servants like these games ?

HENRY. Oh, they all believed I was the Count.

ARV. Ha, ha, ha ! That's rich !

HENRY. But there's more to hear. Opposite this house lives a strange young lady from the country, called Leonora, who must be very rich, for she gets herself up like a princess. She and I met on several occasions, and she has fallen deeply in love with me. She sent an old woman to sound my intentions, and, without more words, I mean to marry her this very afternoon.

ARV. Have you taken clean leave of your senses, Henry ? You may be hanged over this business, when it comes out who you are, and that you have imposed upon a great lady.

HENRY. You don't understand the matter. I am not deceiving her ; she is deceiving herself, and she gives me no peace. I never told her I was a man of property or position ; I only said I lived in the house opposite hers. She runs after me, not I after

her. She is the devil's own flirt, and I shall be hen-pecked; but the chaff about this will affect me little in the high position I shall gain.

ARV. All very fine; but people will say you got yourself up as a gentleman to deceive a real lady.

HENRY. You don't know much about the people of this city. If I had a dollar for every scoundrel who prowls about in a velvet coat, I should be a rich man. If I do get myself up in this way, the only person it concerns is the Count. Why the devil doesn't she ask me straight out, "Who are you?" I can take my oath I never gave her any encouragement, yet the old crone says the lady is dying of love for me. So it's quite certain it is my person she is in love with, and I can safely take my luck.

ARV. Well, in a way the plan may succeed. Ha, ha! what a game!

HENRY. There is my hand, Arv, that you shall have fifty rixdollars this evening.

ARV. Half a hundred rixdollars are worth some trouble, but what am I to do?

HENRY. All I want from you is proper behaviour. You will be my gamekeeper.

ARV. I can easily do that part.

HENRY. What brought you to town?

ARV. I was sent to warn you to have everything ready, because the Count will be here to-day.

HENRY. Wh—ew! To-day! Then I must look sharp. In half-an-hour, Arv, I shall visit the dear lady by appointment. Whilst I am there, you must

call and ask for Count Leander, and leave a letter for me.

ARV. But when the Count comes to hear of all this knavery——

HENRY. He will laugh at it. Do you suppose he will grudge me my good luck? Were I not certain of his goodness of heart, I should never dare to act so. Let us go in for a little.

SCENE 3

MAGDALEN. PERNILLA (*as a lady in her mistress's clothes*).

PERNILLA. I can see no one, Magdalen.

MAGDALEN. Then he must have gone away; for just this moment I saw him standing outside, and I hurried in to keep you company.

PERNILLA. Then run after him, my dear Magdalen. Perhaps he was here, and could not get in.

MAGDALEN. That will never do, Pernilla—everything in moderation. The more dignified your demeanour, the surer you will be of getting him. He certainly won't come before the time he promised—that is, ten o'clock—and now it is barely nine.

PERNILLA. Then tell me how you succeeded in your errand, and everything about it.

MAGDALEN. I executed your commission right well. Ah! you are a lucky woman, Pernilla, to rise to such a position from being only a lady's-maid. He is silly, no doubt; but, so far as I can see, he must be rich.

PERNILLA. The sillier the better, for twenty reasons. When my humble position gets known, instead of running me down for entrapping a young gentleman, folks will laugh, and say, "Good enough for the gowk! He was not worth anything better. He could not have got a young lady of his own wealth and position." For another reason, his folly will often come in useful when we are married. When women make eyes at sensible men, they don't know what's good for them. If I marry a rich fool, I shall take the bone, and he may play with the shadow. Women should rule the roast; and that they cannot do with wide-awake men, except with great trouble and after long manœuvres. But with such fellows as the Count, on the wedding-day we promise to honour and obey; we tone down the promise the next day, annul the promise the third day, take share in the government the fourth day, and sit alone at the helm before the week is out.

MAGDALEN. That may be so.

PERNILLA. Had he not been such a ninny, a poor maidservant like me would never have dared to try it on with him. But he fooled about so long that at last I thought of giving myself out to be somebody, and making use of my lady's clothes and ornaments.

MAGDALEN. When do you think she will come?

PERNILLA. Either to-day or to-morrow, for I have orders to have everything ready to-day. If she turns up before I am married, I shall make a clean

breast of everything—that I am on the point of making my fortune, and so ventured to wear her clothes. She won't change a hair, God bless you! when she hears all, and will help me instead of punishing me. But you have not told me about the commission I gave you.

MAGDALEN. Well, I went there with the brocades, and asked if the gentleman would buy some of the wares of my kind employer, which were very cheap. While he was haggling about the price, I said, "Ah, noble sir, if you only knew something I know, you would not be so hard with me. There's a fine lady there in the house opposite—" "*A propos*," says he, interrupting me, "the lady always appears very friendly when I pass by her window. Do you know her, good woman?" "Yes," says I, "I have the run of the house. She is just come up from the country, and expects her father shortly." "Listen," says he, "and tell me the truth. Has she any inclination to me? She has kissed her hand two or three times to me." When I heard that, I told him the whole story, and made the appointment for ten o'clock to-day.

PERNILLA. That's all right. But we must manage to clinch the bargain to-day, for some one who knows me may turn up from the country and blurt out who I am.

MAGDALEN. Who is your mistress going to marry, Pernilla?

PERNILLA. I am sure I don't know. While she

and I were here together, I fell sick, and she had to travel home alone ; and when I got well and was on the point of following her there, the news came that she was engaged, and orders that I was to stop here and get things ready for her return. But is not this gamekeeper coming here ? He must be the Count's.

SCENE 4

ARV (*as a gamekeeper*). PERNILLA. MAGDALEN.

ARV. Servant, lady ! I don't know whether you know me.

PERNILLA. No, I do not.

ARV. My name is Haresdread, and I am the poor gamekeeper of the young Count opposite. He sends his humblest reputation, and says that if it is convenient to her, he will do Mamsell the honour of calling on her.

PERNILLA. He will be heartily welcome. But now tell me something about your master ; what sort of a man is he ?

ARV. He is a splendid fellow ! Why, he can put a bullet in a penny piece, and he has a couple of rifles that never miss anything ! There's not such another pair of rifles in the country.

PERNILLA. Is he so fond of sport ?

ARV. You just ask our deer and hares. He does have games with them every day of the week. I

don't know whether Madame has heard that his best retriever, Fairfax, is dead ?

PERNILLA. No, indeed I have not.

ARV. Well, indeed he is—dead and buried ; and my master mourned for him as if he was his own brother. He was a good, all-round beast, if I may call a great man's dog a beast. I don't know how he managed to kill the hares so handy, for there never was the sign of a bite about them. (*To MAGDALEN.*) Just suppose, old lady, you are a hare. He took her by the neck like this, and snick ! she was done for.

MAGDALEN (*screams*). Oh ! you grip so tight !

PERNILLA. Has the Count ever been married before ?

ARV. Oh ! nothing to speak of. His father has wanted to get him married more than once, but he won't have one that doesn't suit him. If I may say so, miss, he's quite right. Why should a rich young man marry a body he don't take kindly to ? Young gents will follow their bent. There's something in the wind now, whatever it may be ; but between you and me and the wall, he's over head and ears in love with you.

PERNILLA. I will not deny that he seems to me superior to any gentleman I have ever seen before, and I shan't say how many sleepless nights he has cost me.

ARV. Well, I will stand to this, that you won't be disappointed in him. Lord ! what a pair of legs

he has ! If any man in the county can show a better pair, then let my master saw his legs off, that's all I say. And if you do get him, lady, I'll go odds that the first go-off—it'll be twins ! But I must run back with your answer. *[Exit.*

SCENE 5

MAGDALEN. PERNILLA.

PERNILLA. Ha, ha, ha ! I could hardly keep from bursting out laughing in his face ! The bigger fool the Count is, the better for me, and the easier I shall get him into my clutches.

MAGDALEN. One could judge from the game-keeper what kind of man the Count is.

PERNILLA. He is good enough for me ; I am quite satisfied with him. If he were courteous and polished, he would never waste a look on me. Do you suppose a sensible man of his position would be such a fool ?

MAGDALEN. Anyhow, here he comes.

SCENE 6

HENRY (*in a sedan-chair*). PERNILLA. MAGDALEN.

HENRY. Hey ! stay ! stop ! you scoundrels !

[Gets out of his chair, and speaks to his servant.

Listen, Christopher ! You stay at home, and if a

messenger from the Court comes after me, say I cannot attend to-day, as I am engaged elsewhere.

[*Turns to PERNILLA.*] Ah, *mon cher*! forgive me! It was through the chairmen's fault that I had to make use of my cane. One receives hundreds of annoyances from these mercenary wretches. But for the respect I feel for you, young lady, I believe I should have them hanged.

PERNILLA. Ah, sir, pray forgive them for my sake.

HENRY. For your sake, *mardi*, I could forgive anything, lady. [*The chairmen remove the chair.*]

Apropos, *mon cher*, I shall be compelled to prosecute you for a small theft you have committed.

PERNILLA. What! I commit theft!

HENRY. Yes; you have stolen my heart!

PERNILLA. Ah, sir! I have the same accusation to lay against you. I know not if it becomes the modesty of our sex to make such a confession, but I must frankly own that— But the beating of my heart forbids me to say more.

HENRY. I am a scoundrel if I have been able to sleep a wink the last three nights, and all through you!

PERNILLA. Ah, sir! my case differs not from yours by a hair. Arrows from your eyes have penetrated the inmost chambers of my heart.

HENRY. A—h! *pardi*, that was well said, and I must, *ma foi*, give you a kiss for it.

PERNILLA. I should take it for an honour.

[*Henry kisses her.*]

HENRY. My father, lady, will have me to marry another who is rich and noble, but I will be cut into pieces and chopped into mincemeat before I consent to desert you, *mon cher*.

PERNILLA. Is it possible ? I have made the same desperate resolution. Death only shall tear me from you !

HENRY. Here is my hand on my eternal devotion and fidelity.

PERNILLA. And there is mine that no force shall compel me to accept another. [*They embrace.*

Would you care to step in and see some of my property ?

HENRY. Certainly, dearest. [*Exeunt.*

MAGDALEN (*alone*). The bargain will now be clinched ; for he will suppose all her mistress's finery belongs to Pernilla, who never possessed a dollar's worth in her life. Ha, ha ! but there will be a fearful to-do when the Count discovers how shamefully he is mistaken, and that he has got a common servant-girl instead of a rich lady. But rich as he may be, and high as may be his rank, he is not a bit too good for her ; for I do believe he is the greatest ass that walks the earth. There's nothing noble about him except his rank and riches. The upshot now depends on whether the wedding can be got over before the Lady Leonora arrives. Pernilla promised me 400 rixdollars for my trouble, and I hope in the Lord she has kept them in her own hands. But I must be off to see how things go. [*Exit.*

SCENE 7

HENRY (*alone*).

HENRY. Ha, ha, he, he, hi, hi ! You have scored heavily, Henry ! She is, though I shame to say it, one among a thousand, and by sheer luck I have gained a prize I never dreamt of. It is true that, apart from her money, there is little to choose between her and an ordinary servant-girl ; for she bears only one mark of high breeding—her coquetry. But for a hungry hound like me it's the wealth that weighs. Her boudoir is furnished for all the world like that of a duchess, and I would refuse a barrel of gold if any one offered it for my property. Now she is gone to her dressing-room to change her dress. She changes it every hour, she says, which is silly, but a sign of wealth. We talk together as familiarly now as if we were old married people, and she calls me her heart. But here she comes, dressed in the latest fashion.

SCENE 8

HENRY. PERNILLA. MAGDALEN.

PERNILLA. Pardon, my heart, for leaving you alone so long. How do you like my new cloak ?

HENRY. Very smart indeed, my chick-a-biddy. My sister Sophie has one of the very same material.

Yes, *ma foi*, the very same material. I'm a hangman if it isn't. How much a yard did you pay for it ?

PERNILLA. As if I knew ! When my lady's-maid comes in, she will tell you. How many brothers and sisters have you got, my angel ?

HENRY. Only a sister. She has none of your landed property, which will pass into my hands, only jewelry and money. But here is my gamekeeper, Haresdread.

Enter ARV.

What's the matter, Haresdread ?

ARV. A letter from the country for your honour.

HENRY. It is from my father—my papa, I should say. He always writes to me in French or German. Do you understand French, my soul ?

PERNILLA. I never could abide the French language ; it's too jolly common.

HENRY. I must read what he says [*reads*] :—

Vous plait-il la France comment à Paris à cette heure très humble non pas.

I suppose I'll come to the news presently :—

Recollavet Bordeaux fermez la porte.

Diantre ! here it is. I shall go mad :—

Diable m'importe pluraliter. Voulez-vous dormir ? Nominativus Genitivus Dativus Jean le fou ! Comment vous portez-vous rapportant. Autrement bestialement spælamdisimo.

Ah, what accursed stuff !

[He walks to and fro, and wipes the perspiration from his face.]

PERNILLA. Ah, what is it, my half-heart ?

HENRY. Too monstrous ! And he threatens me at the end, does he not ? Most certainly. *Autrement bestialement spœlamdisimo*. Yes, *autrement* ! Well, I am a man who will hold his own !

PERNILLA. Do say what it is, my duckling.

HENRY. If the worst goes to the worst, I shall still have two farms which were my mother's property.

PERNILLA. Do but tell me what it means, my balm of Gilead.

HENRY. He is my papa, to be sure, and all respect is due to him ; but he may go to the devil !

PERNILLA. Oh ! but what has he written ?

HENRY. He shall learn, *pardi*, that I, *diable m'importe*, am no longer in leading-strings.

PERNILLA. But why conceal it longer from me ?

HENRY. May I die if this is not one of my sister Sophie's intrigues ! Yes, I consent to be called the scum of the earth if it is not !

PERNILLA. What is the intrigue ?

HENRY. You may be *ma sœur*, but you shall learn that I am thy *mon frère*, you little beast !

PERNILLA. Tell me what is the matter, sweet soul, or I shall die.

HENRY. You don't know what it is, baby ? My father has written to say he has heard with the deepest sorrow that I spend my time gallivanting about the town and making love to all the girls. *Pardi*, am I not of an age to know what I am about ?

In such a case I will consult no one but my own heart.

PERNILLA. That is my way too.

HENRY. I am a chap who gets shaved three times a week. }

PERNILLA. But what was it he said that made you so angry ?

HENRY. I am a chap that understands French and Italian like my mother's milk, and ought I not to know what's good for me ? You shall make a very wry face, *mon cher papa !*

PERNILLA. But what is his purpose, my treasure ?

HENRY. He is good enough in himself, little doll, but he allows himself to be led astray. You cannot think how artful my sister Sophie is.

PERNILLA. What is she driving at, then ?

HENRY. I know well enough what scent you are on, my gracious sister ; but you don't know what friends I have at Court. Why, the King once said publicly across the table, "The young gentleman is somewhat eccentric"—meaning me. Listen, little doll. My papa has made a match between me and a young lady in the country, and wishes the marriage to take place at once.

PERNILLA. O Magdalen ! hold me ; I am fainting.

HENRY. You make no mistake about it, chick-a-biddy ; it shall never take place. But what I say is this : to stop it for good, we ought to get married this afternoon.

PERNILLA. That's the best road out of it.

HENRY. Haresdread !

Enter ARV.

ARV. Here, sir.

HENRY. *Taruntula præteritum perfectum je ne sais pas generosamente dans la France par couvert.* Do you understand ?

ARV. *Copis in sandung Spæckavet fripon Monsieur ovis fort bien.* [*Exit ARV.*]

HENRY. I told him to keep the messenger in conversation until my return. I shall send a letter by him to my papa, and let him know my opinion ; but I shall say nothing about our marriage to-day, or we should have him here on the wings of the wind.

PERNILLA. That is true ; we must be mum.

HENRY. My angel, I ought to give you some wedding presents, but I cannot for want of time.

PERNILLA. Oh, let us be married first, and we can think of presents afterwards.

HENRY. I shall give you something to show the strength of my affection. Keep this little ring. It has my likeness on it, which will make it the more valuable.

PERNILLA. I shall give you a bit of trumpery too, just for fun. Here is my miniature portrait.

HENRY. It isn't much like you, my honey.

PERNILLA. No, indeed ; but I am having another done by another artist.

HENRY. Well, the knot will be tied at four o'clock sharp.

PERNILLA. Everything shall be ready by that time.

HENRY. Till then, adieu, my chicken !

PERNILLA. Adieu, my angel !

[HENRY blows his whistle, and the chairmen bring back the chair, in which he seats himself. He and PERNILLA kiss hand to each other. HENRY then takes his eyeglass from his pocket, and adjusts his peruke.]

SCENE 9

PERNILLA. MAGDALEN.

PERNILLA. What do you think now, Magdalen ? Have I not won the game ?

MAGDALEN. Yes, if there is no hitch between this and four o'clock. Whose was that picture you gave him ?

PERNILLA. The Lady Leonora's.

MAGDALEN. Are you stark, staring mad, Pernilla ? How did you dare to do such a thing ?

PERNILLA. When my mistress hears that I have made my fortune by it, she won't be angry, but will jest about it. But let us go and prepare everything for his return. You shall get what I promised you.

[*Exeunt.*]

ACT II

SCENE 1

LEANDER (*alone*).

LEANDER. Never in my life have I spent such a day as this. History seems to repeat itself, and to rehearse the story of Amphitryon. My household seem to take me for some harebrained vagabond. I give them orders; they will not accept them. I ask for my valet; they tell me he went out with his master half-an-hour ago. I tell them I own the house; they reply, "Not this house, though maybe another." I lose my temper; they show me the door, and threaten me with their master. I cannot conceive the meaning of all this. But there goes Arv.—Holla! Arv!

SCENE 2

ARV (*dressed as farm-servant*). LEANDER.

ARV. Who calls? Eh! master, welcome from the country!

LEANDER. I am glad to meet some one who recognises me.

ARV. Why should I not know my master ?

LEANDER. I was beginning to believe I was transformed, or at least that I had mistaken my own house. Tell me, Arv, do I not live in this house ?

ARV. Yes, for aught I know to the contrary. Why do you ask me such a question, sir ?

LEANDER. When I entered the house, no one could possibly say I had had too much to drink ; yet the new servants whom Henry engaged told me their master was just gone out ! What is the meaning of this hateful manœuvring ? Where is Henry ?

ARV. I have seen him only once since I came to town, and he sent me out on your honour's business. He may be back by this.

LEANDER. If I could only get hold of the fellow and learn the origin of this trickery ! I am certain it is some mad prank. What are Henry's headquarters when he goes into the town ?

ARV. He used to go to Christopher's, at the corner ; but I'm afraid he is away somewhere playing cards.

LEANDER. Then it won't be well for him. Has he nothing else to do at such a time as this ? Go away, and see if you can find him. [*Exit ARV.*] That house opposite is certainly my future father-in-law's. I shall call and inquire if they have arrived from the country. But here is a dandy just coming out. What business has he there ?

SCENE 3

LEANDER. HENRY.

HENRY (*kissing his hand to PERNILLA in the window*). Till then, adieu, *mon cher*. Let not the time hang heavy on your hands. Adieu, little Leonora, but have everything ready by four o'clock, my treasure !

LEANDER (*aside*). An escaped lunatic, I presume. This is far more serious than anything that has yet happened to-day.

HENRY. Ha, ha, ha ! She is as amorous as a rat !

LEANDER. Listen, sir ! I would ask what business takes you to that house. Have you treasure or a mistress lodged there ? But surely I ought to know that face.

HENRY. Sir, I humbly beg your pardon !

LEANDER. What, Henry ! Each event of to-day has been more surprising than the preceding one. But I should like to know what are you doing in my clothes ?

HENRY. Oh, sir, grudge me not my luck ! I have made my fortune in that house.

LEANDER. How ?

HENRY. By a young lady from the country called Leonora.

LEANDER. Who lives in that house ?

HENRY. Yes ; it is her father's house.

LEANDER. Will you delude me, poisonous scoundrel. [*Draws his sword.* HENRY *falls on his knees.*

Will you explain to me what all this juggling means ?

HENRY. Grudge me not my luck, kind sir. I am an old and faithful servant.

LEANDER. I shall split your skull unless you tell me at once why you have dressed yourself up in this way, and what business you had in that house.

HENRY. I shall tell everything from beginning to end. When you sent me to town here to prepare everything for your wedding, and to take your clothes and things in hand and to engage some new servants, a strange longing came over me just to try what it was like to be a gentleman of fashion. While I was acting this part, I found that a lady of quality had fallen in love with me, and was following me about.

LEANDER. What young lady was she ?

HENRY. The young lady who lives in that house and is called Leonora.

LEANDER. Bear in mind that if you trifle with me you are a dead man.

HENRY. I give my word, sir, not to say an untrue word. The love-affair drove me to continue the dressing up, for I said to myself, " Even if the Count does find out I have worn his clothes, he won't be angry when he knows his old, true servant made his fortune by it."

LEANDER. Go on, go on !

HENRY. I was told of her affection by an old crone

who came to me. I visited the lady twice a day since, and we are to be married at four o'clock.

LEANDER. What do you say the lady's name is ?

HENRY. Leonora, sir.

LEANDER. And she lives in that house ?

HENRY. Yes ; it is her father's house. They usually live in the country, but that is their town house.

LEANDER. That is enough. You are a criminal, and you shall die.

HENRY. A—h ! Spare me, kind Count ! Wearing your clothes is the only fault I have committed. Her own folks will bear witness that I have had no rest along of her.

LEANDER. It is not for your acts that you shall die, but for your lying words, by which you have blackened the good name of an honourable lady.

HENRY. If all I have said is not true, I will buy a rope myself for you to hang me with. But here comes Arv, who will bear out everything I have said.

SCENE 4

ARV. HENRY. LEANDER.

ARV. No, sir, Henry is not to be found anywhere.

LEANDER. Here, hound, here ! Now you tell me the exact truth, or you two shall die.

ARV (*on his knees*). A—h !

LEANDER. Is it true that the lady who lives in that house is in love with Henry, and is to be married to him this afternoon ?

ARV. It is surely true. But what have I to do with the matter ? I heard her say she cannot sleep o' nights for love of him, and I seen her kiss him. What more they have done is only known to themselves and the devil.

HENRY. Cannot you see, sir, that I have not lied ? Now that I think of it, I have her picture in my pocket that she gave me.

LEANDER. Let me see it. Oh, heavens ! is it possible ? Stand up, both of you ; I shall do you no hurt. What am I to think, or say, or do ? No grief is equal to mine. Has so unexpected a misfortune ever fallen upon any man ? Was there ever so accomplished an actress as this Leonora ? When I reflect on her position and high birth, on her apparent modesty and virtue and purity, this tale is incredible ; yet when I weigh the evidence and look on this portrait, I cannot disbelieve it. My heart is so beset by grief and bitterness that I know not what resolution to take. I shall burst into the house and kill the traitress. No man will charge me with the deed, for all will regard it as a righteous revenge, and will hold death as too small a punishment for her. Yet, can I bring myself to murder her whom I have loved as my own soul till an hour since ? Is it due punishment for her to die by my hand ?

No ; she shall live, and that she may live in all the greater infamy and contempt,¹ I will destroy myself.

[Walks to and fro.]

Yet what cares so debased a creature for contempt ? A woman whom shame has not hindered from breaking her plighted word and from engaging herself to such a fellow, will make merry over my death, which will enable her to gain her object and indulge her passions without restraint. No ; I shall treat her with contempt and quicken Henry's passion, for she is none too good for him. Listen, Henry ! Do you happen to know who this lady is ? She is the very same to whom I was to have been married !

HENRY. I beg your gracious pardon ! And since the job is not complete, I withdraw my pretensions, sir.

LEANDER. You just continue to court her as before.

HENRY. Ah, sir ! I am not so low a scoundrel as to wish to supplant my good master.

LEANDER. You won't supplant me ; I wash my hands of her.

HENRY. It is not for a poor body like me to steal a march on your honour. I shall go straight to her and explain who I am, and I shall tell her my master

¹ Did not chronology forbid, we might suppose that Leander had been studying Heine :—

“Ich grolle nicht, und wenn das Herz auch bricht,
Ewig verlornes Lieb ! ich grolle nicht.
Wie du auch strahlst in Diamantenpracht,
Es fällt kein Strahl in deines Herzens Nacht.”

is angry. She'll come to terms quick enough then, and you can marry her this afternoon.

LEANDER. Had I no more ambition than you, Henry, so it might be. But you just keep your courage up, and she will be your wife before night. I will forward your plans, for I can get my revenge in no other way.

HENRY. I shall die rather than cut my master out.

LEANDER. Very well, Henry, if you won't, I will smarten up Arv, and pave his path to this prize.

ARV. I thank you kindly, sir. I'll have her, if Henry won't.

HENRY. No, thank you, you scoundrel; she's much too nice a morsel for you. If the Count won't have her, I shall be the occupant of that house.

LEANDER. Come, stick to your purpose, Henry, but of all things say nothing of this conversation with me. You shall have a hundred rixdollars when your marriage articles are signed.

HENRY. Can I be certain that your honour is not joking?

LEANDER. Certainly. Nothing could be more scandalous than her behaviour to me, and the only means I have of revenging myself is to get her married to my servant.

HENRY. But, sir, when it comes out that I am only a poor servant, can I be punished for it?

LEANDER. Most certainly not; I shall espouse your cause myself. Every one who hears of her

faithlessness and wantonness will rejoice in her shame.

ARV. I do believe the wench is sweet on me. You won't forbid me to pay you a visit now and then when you are spliced, Henry ?

HENRY. It will be worse for you if you dare to put your foot inside my threshold.

LEANDER. That you must settle between you, as you are friends. Come, let us be going.

[As they go, HENRY catches ARV by the hair and threatens him.]

SCENE 5

LEONORA. PERNILLA. *(In JERONIMUS' house.)*

PERNILLA. When you come to know the reasons, miss, I hope you will look over it.

LEONORA. It is not so much at your wearing my clothes that I am annoyed, as at your playing these pranks out-of-doors when there is so much to be done within.

PERNILLA. I do assure you, miss, it was not from giddiness that I play-acted like that.

LEONORA. I believe you have not quite shaken off the fever you had when I left town. You had better go and lie down. But what urged you to play such tricks ?

PERNILLA. To make my fortune, miss. There is a young gentleman here, as silly as he is rich, who

imagines I am a real lady, and is paying his addresses to me.

LEONORA. I will have no flirtations in this house. Is it want of money or wickedness that induces you to behave in such a way ? Fy ! Shame on you ! I always supposed you had a strong sense of propriety. Such a man will first give you a handful of ducats, and then give you the go-by.

PERNILLA. Oh no, lady ! The affair is of a very different complexion. We are engaged, and will be married to-day at four o'clock, if you do not mar my happiness.

LEONORA. I certainly will not stand in your way, Pernilla ; but have you thought of the consequences when he discovers you are a maidservant ?

PERNILLA. He is a creature who is always on some wildgoose chase. He has been attracted by my person, and promised me marriage without asking who or what I am. So that I am not deceiving him ; he deceives himself.

LEONORA. If you choose to venture on such a step, you are at liberty to take it, so far as I am concerned ; but I fear my father is coming to town in all haste.

PERNILLA. When is he likely to arrive, miss ?

LEONORA. When I was starting, he said he would follow without delay. He will certainly be here some time this afternoon, for I am to be married to-day. But who is this young gentleman you are engaged to ?

PERNILLA. He lives in the opposite house.

LEONORA. Which house ?

PERNILLA. That house there.

LEONORA. You are mad, girl ! You may perhaps have seen him enter that house once in a way ; but he certainly does not live in that house, for I am told it belongs to Count Leander.

PERNILLA. That is so, lady ; he is called Leander. His friend hired the house, which did not belong to Leander ; and that is the very reason he has hurried on our wedding.

LEONORA. It is as I said, girl ; the fever still clings to you.

PERNILLA. On my word, miss, it is as I say. The old woman who lives in the cottage behind will bear witness that Leander, who lives in that house, is engaged to me. Magdalen ! Magdalen ! just come here !

SCENE 6

PERNILLA. MAGDALEN. LEONORA.

PERNILLA. Is it not true, Magdalen, that I am engaged to the young Count Leander, who lives in that house opposite ?

MAGDALEN. It is perfectly true. But, dear lady, do not spoil the good fortune of a servant who has served you so long and so well. She will become a rich and great woman, and will always be grateful, I am sure.

LEONORA. What ! have you conspired together to deceive me ?

MAGDALEN. Far be it from us, pretty lady ; but the matter is exactly as I told you.

PERNILLA. You may punish me as you will, miss, if you can find the least untruth in what I say.

LEONORA. He is called Leander, is he not ?

PERNILLA. Yes.

LEONORA. And he lives in that house opposite ?

PERNILLA. Yes, but he usually lives in the country.

LEONORA. May I ask you, what is that ring you have on your finger ?

PERNILLA. One I had of him to-day.

LEONORA. Oh, hold me ! I faint !

MAGDALEN. Did I not know how things would go ? But why does the lady take on so about this ring ? Surely it is only natural for people to try and make their fortunes.

LEONORA (*on one side, apart*). Yes ; it is his ring. Incredible as their story may seem, it must be as they say. Ah ! were I the worst of sinners, Heaven could not have inflicted a heavier punishment on me. Can a woman in future put her trust in any man's promises ? Can she, from his mien and bearing, divine what dwells in his heart ? For long I declined to receive proposals of marriage, and I dismissed several desirable suitors. None of them pleased me, until I met with this Leander, whose profligacy, I now find, passes all bounds. What shall I do ?

How shall I be revenged ? His perfidy is so monstrous that I cannot resolve on any fitting revenge. Ah ! unhappy me ! In an evil hour did this man darken my father's door ; in an evil hour did I hurry hither to learn my misery ! But what do I say ? Why should I grieve ? Why talk about evil hours ? To-day is surely the luckiest day of my life, for I have discovered his treachery and escaped from the clutches of the basest of men. Listen, Pernilla ! The person who is in love with you is the very person to whom I was engaged.

PERNILLA. Oh, my dear lady, do not be hasty ! May you not be wrong ? Are you quite sure ?

LEONORA. Yes, Pernilla ; there is more than one proof. He told me himself he had just bought the house opposite, which we should occupy when in town. Then, he generally lives in the country ; then, his name is Leander ; and then, the ring, about which there can be no mistake.

PERNILLA. Oh dear ! I shall die of worry and fright !

LEONORA. And I of rage and desire for revenge !

PERNILLA. Take my life, miss, if you will !

LEONORA. On your life hangs my whole welfare ; for I can be only revenged by seeing my maidservant his wife.

PERNILLA. But how did you get engaged to him, miss ?

LEONORA. Six weeks ago he visited my father on business, fell in love with me, and asked me to marry

him. But I have no patience to tell the rest, for my whole body burns with the fever of revenge.¹ I shall return at once to our country house.

PERNILLA. And I with you, Miss. Oh, that I had never set foot in this town and caused my mistress this loss.

LEONORA. Listen, Pernilla! If you have any esteem or regard for me, you must play out this comedy to the fall of the curtain; but of all things keep this conversation secret. Unless you play out the part you have just undertaken, never let me see you again; for I shall die unless I am avenged, and revenge lies this way only.

PERNILLA. Oh dear, oh dear! Is it possible that——

MAGDALEN. You toad! Only do what the lady tells you, and she'll be avenged, you'll be a fine lady, and I'll get the reward you promised me.

LEONORA. Once more I say, Pernilla, that my happiness depends on your playing your part skil-

¹ The spirit of the heroines of the Völsunga Saga breathes in these lines.

Speaking of the ideal of Woman formed by different nations, E. Renan says:—"Comparez Genièvre et Iseult à ces furies scandinaves de Gudruna et de Chrimhilde, et vous avouerez que la femme telle que l'a conçue la chevalerie—cet idéal de douceur et de beauté posé comme but suprême de la vie—n'est une création ni classique, ni chrétienne, ni germanique, mais réellement celtique" ("La Poésie des Races Celtiques" in *Essais de Morale et de Critique*, p. 385). A specimen of the "furie germanique" will be found in Freytag's novel, *Die Verlorne Handschrift*.

fully. If you do so, you will be fortunate in a way, for he has large means.

PERNILLA. That is true; he will just suit me. Since you, miss, will have it so, I shall play the part to the best of my ability.

LEONORA. Go in now, and carry out to the letter what I have ordered. I am going to a friend who will accompany me on my journey home.

[*Exeunt* PERNILLA and MAGDALEN.

LEONORA (*alone*). My anger is now as bitter as my affection was strong. He whom I loved as my own soul, I hate most of all men——

LEANDER (*speaking to HENRY, who is outside*). As I say, Henry! I am now going indoors for a little.

LEONORA. But who speaks? Heavens! the traitor comes!

SCENE 7

LEANDER. LEONORA.

LEANDER. Leonora, is it not? Oh, you are going? Are you indeed so angry with me, virtuous lady?

LEONORA. Noble sir, how should I be else than virtuous? Have you so completely absorbed all virtue in your single self that none remains for others to share?

LEANDER. Ha, ha, ha! chaste Lucretia!

LEONORA. Ha, ha, ha! chaste Joseph!

LEANDER. I admire you, young lady!

LEONORA. You are an incomparable lordling !

LEANDER. Do you recognise this portrait, virtuous lady ?

LEONORA. Not in your hands.

LEANDER (*throwing the portrait towards her*). Now you have it back.

LEONORA. Do you recognise this portrait, virtuous sir ?

LEANDER. I do, unfortunately.

LEONORA. See, there it lies——

LEANDER. And there lies the snuffbox you gave me——

LEONORA. And your wretched bracelet——

LEANDER. And your wretched gold-headed cane——

LEONORA. And your wretched earrings——

LEANDER. And there the love and loyalty you plighted to me.

LEONORA. Fy ! There lie your own !

LEANDER. Adieu, virtuous lady ! Good-bye to your whole family !

LEONORA. Adieu, incomparable Count ! Adieu !

[*Exit.*

LEANDER (*alone*). What a graceless quean ! Far from blushing at her shame, she is defiant. But I shall be amply avenged when she learns that her beloved is transformed into a common valet.

SCENE 8

ARV (*alone*).

ARV. I thought there was some noise outside, but I don't see any one. No, there's nobody there. I must have been dreaming. I was thinking of that accursed Henry and the luck he has had to-day. It was the devil's own spring to jump right up from flunkey to gentleman. I am not envious ; but I don't mind saying that if I could wring his neck, I would. How are his deserts greater than mine ? I have served as long and as faithfully as he. My appearance is just as good as the scoundrel's. If I had only been sent first into town instead of him, I might have had all this good fortune ; but just because I was not sent on this errand, I must remain servant, while he becomes a gentleman. But I shall look uncommonly sharp after the fifty rixdollars he promised me. And it may happen, too, that I shall have a finger in his pie ; for that hussy is a queer one. If I could get hold of the old crone, I should send her to praise me to the other. I shall spy out how the land lies through this hole in the door.

SCENE 9

ARV. HENRY.

HENRY. Where the devil is Arv now, just when I want him ? But there he is outside,

trying to slip into the house! This will drive me mad.

[Steals up behind ARV, takes him by the hair, and drags him back.]

ARV. A—h!

HENRY. Will you keep your nose out of that, you dog?

ARV. What wrong have I done you?

HENRY. Clear out of this, I say!

ARV. May I not stand in the street?

HENRY. Not up against this house. If I catch you making eyes at that house, I'll hang you out of one of the windows, as an example and a warning to others.

ARV. You haven't the power to do it?

HENRY. Ha, ha! As if a man with half a ton of gold, like me, could not hang a farm-labourer!

ARV. If you had a whole ton, for all that you were born a lackey. There's a difference between rich folks and gentlefolks.

HENRY. There's none whatever. If I were a great man's agent, I should be a small person compared to him; but if I did him out of all his property, I should be a more important man than he, even if he were to keep his title and I was called plain Henry, like I am.

ARV. All the same, you would not be gentle.

HENRY. Yes, I should; for were I and my master to visit a café afterwards, the host would give him

the first place, but me the best chair ; would give him the leg of the chicken first, but me the breast afterwards ; would pay him empty compliments for his title's sake, but pay me solid honour for my coin's sake. Before I came to Count Leander, I served a decayed gentleman, who was once asked out to some house where we met a rich merchant. We were received with great ceremony and hollow welcome. My master was shown to the highest seat, and coffee was served to him first. The merchant got the last cup and the best—why ? Because when our host visited my master he got a pinch of snuff, and when he visited the merchant he got a good meal. You meet two men, Arv—the one sitting in a carriage, the other trudging on foot through the mire, although the highest in rank of the two. Which, pray, do you think the greatest man ?

ARV. Him in the carriage.

HENRY. That's what I say, though the man on foot held the higher rank. If gentlefolks be those who are treated with the truest honour, then a rich merchant is gentler than a poor nobleman. The one has the bone, the other the shadow, of honour. Therefore, Arv, if I get more money with this young woman than my master has, I shall be really gentler than he, and you'll have to change your tune when you come in my way for the future.

ARV. I can't make head nor tail of what you're talking about.

HENRY. If I was to give you twenty rixdollars

more wages than Leander does, which would you prefer to serve ?

ARV. You, of course.

HENRY. Well, that's the end of the chapter, just to explain matters to you. Will you keep your eyes off that house ? Here, in with you ; there's lots to be done ! *[Pushes ARV into LEANDER'S house.*

HENRY (*alone*). That is not wise, perhaps ; for when one marries a coquette, one ought to humour her in the beginning, and keep open house the first year. When I settle down in the saddle, I shall take down my signboard, and my dear wife must dance to my fiddle. I shall be submissive and patient until I get the money into my own hands ; after that she'll be no better off than other ladies who have married as she has done. *[Exit.*

ACT III

SCENE 1

LEONORA. MAGDALEN.

LEONORA. So it is all over, from first to last.

MAGDALEN. Yes ; they are married, and no one now can put them asunder.

LEONORA. You saw the legal formality carried through ?

MAGDALEN. Yes ; it took place before my eyes. But there will be a dreadful scene in that house when he finds out she is a maidservant.

LEONORA. That does not matter. But for his means, she would have been too good for such a profligate. However, it was a great stroke for a poor servant-girl to bloom suddenly into a lady. But where is Leander ?

MAGDALEN. He took leave immediately after the ceremony, and promised to return in the evening to take away his bride.

LEONORA. Ha, ha, ha ! Please see if you can bring Pernilla here.

MAGDALEN. I shall bring her here at once. But I hope, lady, you'll keep her to her promise, for she promised me four hundred rixdollars for my help.

LEONORA. She shall keep her promise.

MAGDALEN. I shall go, then. *[Exit.*

LEONORA (*alone*). I have endured derision and vexation, it is true, but I have taken a great revenge. He showed no sign of shame for his villainy when he spoke with me, but scorned me and belied me into the bargain. This is the lowest depth of baseness to which a man can descend. I know not on what footing I am to receive Pernilla. I had better call her "Madame," for the first book minxes in her position study is the *Rules of Precedence*. But here she comes.

SCENE 2

LEONORA. PERNILLA. MAGDALEN.

LEONORA (*aside*). I must first try if she is haughty. (*Aloud.*) Well, Pernilla, how are things going?

[PERNILLA looks sulky, and makes no answer.

LEONORA. How have matters progressed, my dear lady?

PERNILLA. I thank you, miss, for your inquiry. We are now an honest married couple. In half-an-hour he will return and bring me to his estate.

LEONORA. I am glad of that; I congratulate you.

PERNILLA. Have you been to your home, as you intended, miss?

LEONORA. No; I changed my mind, and sent an express to my father instead, to hurry him on. He will be here almost immediately.

MAGDALEN. What I fear is, that when the Count knows all the circumstances, he will run away from you, Pernilla.

PERNILLA. When the young lady calls me "lady," perhaps you will suit your mouth to the word, Magdalen, considering the position I now hold. Whether he runs away or stays, I am legally married to him.

LEONORA. Where could he run to? His estate cannot run away, and he has not a commission in the army.

PERNILLA. I have at present to consider whether I shall let him know my position now or at bedtime.

LEONORA. Perhaps the time which my father may advise would be best. He is coming at once. Let us go in until then. *[Exeunt.]*

SCENE 3

LEANDER. HENRY.

HENRY. I blush, sir, when I think how well I have carried out your orders.

LEANDER. I can assure you, Henry, this is the greatest service you have ever done me.

HENRY. And yet she was your affianced bride, sir!

LEANDER. It was precisely for this reason that I determined to punish her. Had I not been avenged on her, I must have turned upon her father, who allowed dust to be thrown in my eyes about her disposition.

HENRY. But has she really means ?

LEANDER. She got a large property from her mother, which her father cannot withhold from her ; but I call Heaven to witness that I never spent a thought on her money—it was herself I wanted. You yourself, who saw with what grace she bore herself in her father's house while I was there, would have denied upon oath that she could have acted as she has done.

HENRY. No man can imagine how artful women are, sir. But I shall ride with a pretty taut rein when I get down in the saddle. I tremble to think of her father, for I'm afraid he will lay hands on me and have me arrested.

LEANDER. There is no danger of that. I shall speak first with Mr. Jeronimus, and lament over his daughter's abominable conduct. Afterwards you shall appear in your valet's livery, and tell the whole tale. Either he will attempt to wreak his vengeance on you—in which case I will defend you as an honest man—or he will abandon his daughter and allow her to get clear off, which is most probable. In any case, she retains her mother's property. But how did you manage to leave her ?

HENRY. After the marriage was completed, I took leave of her for an hour, and promised to return then and bring her to my estate. I had much trouble to get away for so long a time, for she is as love-sick as a rat, and I believe she counts the minutes while I am away.

LEANDER. Ah ! it is a frightful story. Those who come after us will hold it for fable. But I see Mr. Jeronimus coming. Go in, and put on your livery until I want you. [Exit HENRY.]

SCENE 4

JERONIMUS. LEANDER.

JERONIMUS (*to himself*). My daughter sends me an express to say I am to come to town at once ; but why, I cannot conceive. Is she afraid of some obstacle delaying her marriage. But here is the Count. (*To LEANDER.*) Your servant, my dear son-in-law ; our roads lie together. Have you spoken with my daughter since she came to town ?

LEANDER. Yes, I have.

JERONIMUS. Why has she sent me an express ?

LEANDER. She probably knows the reason. She may have something weighing on her mind which she wishes to explain to her father.

JERONIMUS. Indeed ! But don't you know what it is ?

LEANDER. No. We have had very few words between us.

JERONIMUS. The words were smothered in blandishments, eh ? That's an ancient mode of conversation——

LEANDER. Of which we made very little use.

JERONIMUS. Of course ! But if I had a dollar for

every kiss given since she came to town, I should be a rich man.

LEANDER. Pray, do not say so, Mr. Jeronimus.

JERONIMUS. But it's gospel truth ! Why did she send me the express ?

LEANDER. Upon my word, I cannot say.

JERONIMUS. This is some trickery you have hatched between you ; but I'll get to the bottom of it when I meet my daughter.

LEANDER. That I do not doubt.

JERONIMUS. You are both of you annoyed, maybe, that you cannot be married on the instant.

LEANDER. I can assure you, I am not. For the lady, I cannot speak.

JERONIMUS. I don't believe a word of it. As if you were not every bit as much in love with her as she with you. Ha, ha, ha ! Come, let us go in.

LEANDER. I have no business to transact in your house.

JERONIMUS. This is no time for joking ; the evening is at hand. Come, let us in. There is some little comedy on the slips—ha, ha, ha !—but there is a time for everything.

LEANDER. You have an uncommonly large amount of comedy to hear when you meet her.

JERONIMUS. I hope to heaven she has not hurried over the ceremony before I came !

LEANDER. That she certainly has done.

JERONIMUS. Eh ? I would not for anything that such a thing had happened. That is an infernally

hasty way of going to work. Surely you might have waited for my coming !

LEANDER. If you are addressing yourself to me, I beg to say I took no part in what has happened.

JERONIMUS. What the devil is all this beating about the bush ?

LEANDER. If there has been any double-dealing, it has been on her part.

JERONIMUS. You said at first you had very little conversation with her ; and now you say that——

LEANDER. It is quite true. The conversation I had with her was very short, and very sweet ; for the last words I had the honour of addressing to her were, “ To the devil with you, wretch ! ”

JERONIMUS. What on earth do you mean, son-in-law ? Such talk is enough to distract one !

LEANDER. The word “ son-in-law ” jars upon my ears, sir. Pray, dispense with the title.

JERONIMUS. What ! Did you not solicit my daughter’s hand ?

LEANDER. I do not deny it.

JERONIMUS. Did you not become engaged to her ?

LEANDER. I do not at all deny it.

JERONIMUS. Are you not my son-in-law to be ?

LEANDER. That I must altogether deny.

JERONIMUS. The devil ! You cannot deny it. If you attempt to draw back, I shall cite you and sue you while you have sixpence in your pocket.

LEANDER. You would lose your case ; you would be cast at law, Mr. Jeronimus. The case is lost already.

JERONIMUS. Why should I lose my case ?

LEANDER. That you will learn when you speak with your daughter.

JERONIMUS. One thing is clear—there has been some misunderstanding between you.

LEANDER. Oh, that is absolutely certain.

JERONIMUS. But in what does the misunderstanding consist ?

LEANDER. I will not, sir, forestall what your daughter may say on the subject. You must have the frightful story from herself.

JERONIMUS. I shall very shortly know all. But of one thing I am certain : my daughter has originated no scandal. Though I should not praise my own child, she is far too gentle and too virtuous to do so.

LEANDER. She is virtue itself.

JERONIMUS. What in the devil's name mean these whims, son-in-law ?

LEANDER. Sir, I must beg you will dispense with——

JERONIMUS. What can all this mean ? I shall go in at once and rid me of this suspense. [*Exit.*

SCENE 5

LEANDER.

LEANDER. She will now tell her tale herself, for it can be no longer concealed. Her father may strike her and pack her off with her lackey—there is nothing

else for him to do. As for me, he may do as he pleases; but whatever happens, I have a great revenge. I must now go in and hold Henry in readiness; for if she has not told the tale, he shall tell it. Ah! had I not loved her so well, the fire of my revenge would not have burned so fiercely.

[*Exit.*

SCENE 6

JERONIMUS. LEONORA.

JERONIMUS. No. Come here, my dear, where we can have a little private conversation. But I see he is gone out.

LEONORA. Who is gone?

JERONIMUS. Leander.

LEONORA. I can quite understand it. His evil conscience would not allow him to remain here.

JERONIMUS. What the deuce is all this misunderstanding between you? He fired up when I called him "son-in-law." He would give me no reason, and has sent me to you to explain matters.

LEONORA. He is ashamed of his misconduct, and prefers that I should describe it.

JERONIMUS. So far as I could judge, he had a clear conscience, and he implied that the fault was yours.

LEONORA. The story is this: When I arrived here, I found Pernilla magnificently dressed. I was quite frightened at this, and asked the reason. She informed me that Leander had made love to her in

the forenoon, and promised her marriage. I did not believe the story until it was corroborated by the old woman who lives behind this house, and until I saw a ring on her finger which I recognised at once as Leander's.

JERONIMUS. Surely it is not possible that a gentleman of his position and property wants to marry a servant ?

LEONORA. Wants to marry her ? He has married her ! But he is not yet aware that she is a servant ; for as she thought fit to wear my clothes and ornaments, he imagines she is a rich young lady.

JERONIMUS. This is the most painful blow I ever received in my life. Did you ever observe any symptoms of vice in him before ?

LEONORA. Had I done so, I should never have accepted him. Like yourself, I took him for an honourable and sensible nobleman, and there was nothing in his conduct while in our house which would have justified us in thinking otherwise.

JERONIMUS. That is true. I was much impressed by his upright conduct.

LEONORA. How people can dissemble ! But he will be frightfully punished ; for when it becomes known that his bride is a lady's-maid, he will be a byword all over the country.

JERONIMUS. No punishment could be too great ; he deserves a greater one.

LEONORA. I myself lent a hand to help on his marriage with Pernilla.

JERONIMUS. You were right, my daughter.

LEONORA. Had I not secured this revenge, I believe I should have died of grief. But now I have a contented mind, and I thank Heaven for delivering me out of the hands of so profligate a man.

JERONIMUS. There he is, just leaving the house. I shall go out and draw him a faithful picture of his virtue.

LEONORA. I shall retire for so long, for I cannot bear him before my eyes. *[Exit.]*

SCENE 7

JERONIMUS. LEANDER.

JERONIMUS. Welcome back, Count. I have now become acquainted with the whole story.

LEANDER. Is it not a beautiful one ?

JERONIMUS. Yes, sir ; and I am told you are perfectly blameless.

LEANDER. What else ?

JERONIMUS. It is a foul transaction !

LEANDER. I congratulate you, as the lady's father.

JERONIMUS. I congratulate myself on the turn things have taken.

LEANDER (*putting on his hat*). I wish you good-morning.

JERONIMUS (*putting on his hat*). I shall also say "good morning." You are a nice fellow, sir !

LEANDER. Whatever sort of fellow I may be, I

was too good for your daughter ; and if you possessed a spark of generosity, you would acknowledge it, if you know the true story.

JERONIMUS. I do know the true story ; but the after-piece, which is coming, will be the most enjoyable part of the performance.

LEANDER. I quite agree : the afterpiece will be the most amusing.

JERONIMUS. If you have not a piece of rope available, I feel disposed to lend you one, on condition that it be returned when you have made use of it.

LEANDER. Do not imagine that I grieve for the loss of your daughter. On the contrary, I rejoice over it.

JERONIMUS. I do not doubt it, since I have come to know your depravity.

LEANDER. You show your own depravity in defending her. What I did, I did in revenge, and all the world will say I did right.

JERONIMUS. What wrong has my daughter done you ?

LEANDER. Oh, none ; none whatever ! It was no wrong to break her plighted troth and marry my servant !

JERONIMUS. Curse you for a buffoon ! I call it the extreme of villainy, first to commit a scandalous act, and then to charge an honourable lady with it. Out upon you ! You are unfit to live !

LEANDER. Your virtuous daughter has added to her other iniquities that of befooling her father.

JERONIMUS. You lie in your throat ! I say that you are married to my maidservant, Pernilla, to whom you engaged yourself this morning.

LEANDER (*aside*). Ah ! in what mystifications they have involved this old man ! But their respite shall be short. (*Aloud.*) I shall at once dispel some of your delusions. Here ! Henry ! Arv !

SCENE 8

JERONIMUS. LEANDER. HENRY. ARV.

LEANDER. Henry, this is your father-in-law, to whom you have to introduce yourself.

HENRY (*on his knees*). Ah, kind sir and father-in-law, I——

JERONIMUS. To the madhouse, dog ! Am I your father-in-law ?

HENRY. Though only a poor serving-man, I shall always be a dutiful son-in-law.

JERONIMUS. See, fellow ! Here is sixpence for you. Now, be off ! I am still in possession of my reason, and love not to converse with mad folks.

HENRY. I humbly ask your forgiveness.

JERONIMUS. Ask God for forgiveness, who has taken away your understanding. You have done me no wrong that I know of.

HENRY. Yes, sir, I have done something that will stir your anger ; but any young fellow who

was tempted as I was would have done the same.

JERONIMUS. Yes, no doubt you have had your temptations. I pity you, and I shall remember you and all feeble-minded people in my prayers.

HENRY. I am not wanting in understanding, sir, but——

JERONIMUS. Well, if you are not wanting in understanding, you have several bees under your bonnet. I came into this city to-day only to find it one vast lunatic asylum ! Away, fellow ; there is your sixpence !

HENRY. Surely it is all too small a dower for an only daughter !

JERONIMUS. How the poor creature's mind wanders ! Heaven be merciful to you, young man. Off now, and chatter with that young nobleman, whose brain is disordered also !

HENRY. That is my master, who will take up my defence.

JERONIMUS (*to LEANDER*). Is this your servant ?

LEANDER. That is so, and he is in no way wanting in understanding.

JERONIMUS. I am glad to find you think him sane, for it now occurs to me that your wicked deed may have been done in a fit of frenzy. There could be no other excuse for it.

LEANDER. He may be as mad as the vex'd sea, but he will always retain the conviction that he is your son-in-law.

JERONIMUS. Exactly ! Matters go better and better. And now, good-bye, madmen all !

[He is about to go, but ARV follows him and holds him back.]

ARV. Kind Sir, I have a request to make you.

JERONIMUS. Well, what is it ?

ARV. That Henry be made to pay me the fifty rixdollars he promised me.

JERONIMUS. By all means in the world. You ruffian there ! pay this rascalion fifty rixdollars, if you please.

LEANDER. Hear me, my dear Mr. Jeronimus. I can excuse your conduct and strange demeanour, for the present affair is so extraordinary that it might affect the strongest brain. I was in much the same condition as you are now, when I first heard it. Pray have patience to listen to the story told in a few words, and then judge whether I did wrong or not.

JERONIMUS. I am quite ready to hear it. Pray speak on.

LEANDER. Your daughter charges me with having broken my engagement, proposed to her maid in the forenoon, and been actually married to her since then. If I can prove that I have not been three hours in town at this present moment, will you believe your daughter's statements ?

JERONIMUS. If you can prove that to me, I am bound to believe you ; but the whole issue lies in the proof.

LEANDER. Do you hold Mr. Leonard to be an honourable and truthful man ?

JERONIMUS. He is an excellent man, and a good friend of mine.

LEANDER. Arv ! hurry away to Mr. Leonard, and beg him to come and see me without delay.

[*Exit ARV.*]

Mr. Leonard will pledge you his word that for the last month I have never once been in town before two o'clock in the afternoon.

JERONIMUS. If Mr. Leonard assures me of that, I am sure I don't know what I shall say.

LEANDER. While we are waiting for him, hear more of the story. During my absence, this servant had all my clothes and effects in his keeping, and from sheer wantonness, as he declares to me, he made use of my clothes and carriage to act the part of a fine gentleman. Your daughter, who has been in town for some days——

JERONIMUS. I am not sure whether she arrived in town to-day or some days since, because she and I started for town from different points.

LEANDER. Yes, Mr. Jeronimus, unhappily for herself she has been here some days ; and meeting my servant several times in all his bravery, she fell in love with him.

HENRY. I can take my oath I never thought of such an adventure. She gave me encouragement, and put an old beldam on to me, who invited me in to her in the forenoon. We then got engaged, and

we were married in the afternoon. That's why I went on my knees and asked for forgiveness.

LEANDER. You will find, Mr. Jeronimus, that the matter is so.

JERONIMUS. The charges you bring against her are precisely similar to the charges she makes against you.

LEANDER. That is the way of the world. When a man commits a crime, he straightway lays it at the door of another. A bad conscience and fear of her father's anger led her to garble the story.

SCENE 9

LEONARD. JERONIMUS. LEANDER. HENRY. ARV.

LEONARD. Well, what news? Why, here is Mr. Jeronimus! Welcome to town, sir.

JERONIMUS. My dear Mr. Leonard, you are an honourable and truthful man, and we have invited you here to clear up a certain matter.

LEONARD. What is this matter?

JERONIMUS. I wish to learn from you when Count Leander came to town.

LEONARD. Ha, ha, ha! No one can tell you that better than the Count himself. Can you not remember, my friend, when we arrived?

LEANDER. I remember perfectly, but a certain doubt has been thrown on my veracity. Come, say

plainly, my friend, whether we have been here for some days, or only came to-day.

LEONARD. What a question to ask ! You know full well we only arrived to-day.

LEANDER. In the forenoon or afternoon ?

LEONARD. Well, by our stomachs it was forenoon, for we were dinnerless ; but by the clock it was past two. What does all this lead to ?

LEANDER. It serves to remove the foulest blot that can be cast on a man's honour. The story is this——

JERONIMUS. Pray, sir, do not again rehearse the story ; I've had enough of it. I believe this gentleman's word.

LEONARD. Count Leander and I have been eight days together in the country, and we only arrived in town at two o'clock to-day. I am ready to repeat this on oath and support it by witnesses if necessary.

JERONIMUS. My dear sir, you are one of the most honourable men I know, and there is no need of oath or witness. My daughter, I am forced to admit, has lied ; and having brought herself to tell one lie, she found little difficulty in telling another.

LEANDER. Will you in future be more careful about your statements ? Am I mad now ? Am I a rascal ? Am I depraved ? When I reached the town, this odious betrothal had already taken place, and I call Heaven to witness with what bitterness and sorrow I heard of it. I had then no other means of revenge than to urge my servant to complete the engagement.

JERONIMUS. Ah! ah! surely for my sake you might have stopped her from making so shameful a marriage, even though you cast her off yourself.

LEANDER. The man is only a common servant, sir, yet he is far too good for her.

HENRY. Dear father-in-law, forgive her, and be reconciled to us both.

JERONIMUS. Her I will put in confinement, and you I will hang.

LEANDER. You shall not injure one hair of his head.

JERONIMUS. No; but I will injure them all, and that simultaneously.

LEANDER. He has done no wrong; she led him astray.

HENRY. All men are tricksters in trade, but here we have the law of the land.

JERONIMUS. Yes, most unfortunately for you.

HENRY. You cannot withhold her mother's property.

JERONIMUS. I merely say you will be hanged in the morning.

LEANDER. Not without a struggle! I have been cruelly misled by an abandoned woman, and for that you must answer before the Courts in the first place. Come, friend Leonard, let us step inside, and you shall hear the whole story.

[*Exeunt* LEANDER, LEONARD, HENRY, and ARV.

JERONIMUS (*knocking at his own door*). Hey! Let Leonora come out alone. (*Aside.*) I shall first pro-

nounce my curse upon her, and then put her in confinement.

SCENE 10

JERONIMUS. LEONORA.

LEONORA. Well, dear Papa, has he confessed ?

JERONIMUS. Come here, that I may slay a malefactress.

LEONORA. Ah, Heaven ! What does this mean, Papa ?

JERONIMUS. Papa, Papa ! Am I your father ? One of our watchdogs should be your father, for you are not human. Shame on you, abandoned slut, with your crocodile tears ! I shall confine you in a cage, and the servants shall make what they can by exhibiting you to the public.

LEONORA. Ah ! I can no more ! But were I a thousand times your daughter, your power does not extend so far. A master dare not use such words to his slave.

JERONIMUS. Eh ! do not be too sure of that.

LEONORA. What have I done ? I defy you—aye, the whole world—to speak one word against my good name and character. I know what obedience I owe to my father, but— Oh, Heaven ! I send for my father to console me in my hour of affliction, and he treats me as though I were a dumb brute.

JERONIMUS. Does a woman who has behaved as you have done deserve other treatment ?

LEONORA. I ask again, what have I done ?

JERONIMUS. Just what you accuse Count Leander of having done. You have broken your promise ; you have married a low fellow from pure vice ; you have cruelly deceived me ; and you have incensed me against an honourable man.

LEONORA. My heart will break from sorrow ! Does he dare to speak of me in such a way ? Does he dare to deny what he has just done ?

JERONIMUS. He may well deny what he can prove to be false. Mr. Leonard has just given me his word that Leander has not been in town for a month, and that he did not arrive here to-day until two o'clock in the afternoon.

LEONORA. Oh ! this is too much. Pernilla ! Magdalen ! come in ! come in !

SCENE 11

PERNILLA. MAGDALEN. LEONORA. JERONIMUS.

LEONORA. Oh ! come and bear witness to my innocence ! Leander charges me with his own misdeed, and dares to assure my father he is only just arrived in town.

PERNILLA. Then it must have been his ghost who engaged himself to marry me this afternoon and gave me this ring.

MAGDALEN. I can give my word for the truth of this.

JERONIMUS. And I can prove by unimpeachable witnesses that the Count has been falsely accused.

MAGDALEN. Well, sir, the notary who drew out the marriage contract is now in the house. You will believe him, though you take us all to be liars. I shall bring him here. *[Exit.*

JERONIMUS. If the notary corroborates what you say, I really shall not know what to think. But I shall hear him before I come to any conclusion. You must remain where you are ; you shall not quit my presence.

LEONORA. I have too clear a conscience to think of flight.

JERONIMUS (*aside*). Oh ! that all may turn out happily !

SCENE 12

PERNILLA. LEONORA. JERONIMUS. MAGDALEN.
NOTARY.

NOTARY. How can I be of service to you, sir ?

JERONIMUS. I would ask you, Mr. Notary, to state exactly who were the two persons you united in marriage to-day in this house.

NOTARY (*pointing to PERNILLA*). There stands the bride, sir. She can answer you best.

JERONIMUS. But who was she married to ?

NOTARY. To a young gentleman who lives opposite.

JERONIMUS. This cannot be so, sir, for——

NOTARY. And I beg to say distinctly that it is so. Do you suggest, sir, that a man of my character lies, or that I play fast and loose in matters connected with my profession ?

MAGDALEN. I swear by Heaven she is actually married to Leander—that's what I swear.

SCENE 13

LEONARD. THE FOREGOING.

LEONARD (*to LEANDER, who is inside his house*). Adieu, my dear fellow, and be contented. You will have a terrible revenge. It is an abominable story.

JERONIMUS. See, here is Mr. Leonard, who gives evidence against you all.

LEONORA. Do you venture to assert, Mr. Leonard, that Leander only reached the town this afternoon ?

LEONARD. Do you venture to deny it ?

LEONORA. Yes ; for he became engaged to my lady's-maid in the forenoon.

LEONARD. And I can pledge my word that in the forenoon he was several miles away.

NOTARY. Pray be careful what you say, sir ; for I myself drew out the marriage contract to-day between him and this young lady.

LEONARD. That is odd ! I have never yet been convicted of lying. If you will not take my word, I shall call half a score of witnesses.

JERONIMUS. Ah, Heavens ! what does all this juggling mean ? My daughter accuses Leander, and Leander accuses my daughter, of infidelity. On one hand stand credible witnesses against her, on the other hand credible witnesses against him. How under Heaven is the mystery to be unravelled ?

LEONARD. There is but one way of unravelling it, Mr. Jeronimus, and that is by confronting the witnesses. I will give my life for it that there is some mistake. Remain here, please, all of you, and I shall go and fetch Leander and his people.

[Goes out to bring them.]

NOTARY. I too have come decidedly to the opinion that there is some knavery at the bottom of all this, for otherwise the case is inconceivable.

SCENE 14

LEANDER. HENRY. ARV. LEONARD. JERONIMUS.
LEONORA. PERNILLA. MAGDALEN. THE NOTARY.

LEONARD. I must ask you all to be silent, and allow me to speak.

(*To PERNILLA.*) Do you maintain that you are married to this gentleman (*pointing to LEANDER*) ?

PERNILLA. No, sir ; I have never said so. I never saw the gentleman before. I referred to another.

LEONARD. Do you, Henry, maintain that you are married to this young lady (*pointing to LEONORA*) ?

HENRY. No, sir ; I do not know who the lady is.

But there stands my dearest wife, to whom I must discover myself and beg for forgiveness.

[He falls on his knees before PERNILLA.]

Ah, excellent lady, be not angry at seeing me changed from a man of fashion into a lackey! Remember that we are all made of the same clay,¹ and that you encouraged me to take this bold step. I should not have dared to take it had I known beforehand that you were engaged to my master, Count Leander, and that this gentleman, of whom I am much afraid, was your worshipful father.

PERNILLA. A—h! are you the young noble I am married to? *[She seizes him by the hair.]*

HENRY. O—h! spare my life, my lady!

[The others separate them, and hold back]

PERNILLA.

PERNILLA. Ah! this is a rare story! I thought to do him, and he has done me! I thought he was a great man when I saw him in his master's clothes and I put on my mistress's clothes and ornaments to make my fortune. Heavens! is it possible that I am to fall from a grand lady to a lackey's squaw?

HENRY. To the devil with you, you scullerymaid.

[All laugh.]

¹ This article of Henry's convenient ethics is put more clearly by Milord Artur in Goldoni's *Pamela Nubile*, i. 13: "La natura è madre comune, ed ama ella indistintamente i suoi figli, e della loro unione indistintamente è contenta." But when cross-examined on the subject, he declares it is before all things necessary "mantenere il proprio decoro."

PERNILLA (*gives him a box in the ear*). That is for your estate——

HENRY (*gives her a box in the ear*). And that for your mother's property——

PERNILLA (*gives him a box in the ear*). And that for your sister, Miss Sophie——

HENRY (*gives her a box in the ear*). And that for your high birth !

[She catches him by the hair ; he clutches her by the throat. The others separate them.]

LEONARD. Be silent, and explain this matter, in which your betters are deeply interested.

PERNILLA. Let me tear out his eyes first !

HENRY. Let me wring her neck first !

JERONIMUS. I order you to be quiet and tell us the circumstances.

PERNILLA. I thought this drudge was a noble.

HENRY. I thought this she-dragon was a rich lady.

PERNILLA. I saw, of course, that he was a fool.

HENRY. I was well aware that she was a light o' love.

PERNILLA. It was just his folly that goaded me on.

HENRY. It was just the lightness of her conduct that egged me on.

PERNILLA. He bore his master's name, Leander.

HENRY. She bore her mistress's name, Leonora.

PERNILLA. And now I find he is only a shoeblack.

HENRY. And now I find I am spliced to a kitchen-wench. *[They try to close, but are held back by the others.]*

LEONARD. Now, my dear friends, you know the causes of the war. Away now; renew your old friendship, and ask one another's forgiveness.

LEANDER (*kneeling before LEONORA*). Dearest girl, I confess I have sinned grievously against you, Nothing in the world ought to have induced me to doubt your virtue, but my head was turned by this extraordinary history.

LEONORA (*kneeling before LEANDER*). Ah, dear Leander! I too beg for forgiveness with bitter tears.

LEANDER. Had not my affection been so strong, my anger would not have been so great.

LEONORA. Had I not loved you so dearly, revenge would never have entered into my thoughts.

LEANDER. Will you then forgive my fault?

LEONORA. Will you too overlook mine?

LEANDER. I forgive you with all my heart.

LEONORA. I will think no more of the matter.

[*As she speaks these last words, HENRY and PERNILLA again attack each other, and are again separated. LEANDER and LEONORA embrace, and stand up.*]

JERONIMUS (*weeping*). My dear child, I also have to ask your forgiveness.

LEANDER. Say no more about it, dear father-in-law. The very same circumstances that misled us incensed you.

JERONIMUS. But what are we to do with the confounded pair whose foolery has caused all this disturbance?

LEANDER. Dear father-in-law, let us think of nothing but joy and gladness. We must try and reconcile them. Here, you newly-married pair! away and become reconciled. You are joined together for better or for worse.

PERNILLA. But he deceived me.

HENRY. But she deceived me.

LEANDER. You may fairly cry quits with each other. Come now, take each other's hands.

[They take hands.]

MAGDALEN. You know, Pernilla, you promised me four hundred rixdollars for my help.

PERNILLA. Here's a halfpenny for you. You can't ask for more after such an upshot.

ARV. And, Henry, the money you promised me?

HENRY. Here's a box on the ear for you in payment; and if things had gone different, you might have had more.

LEANDER. To dispel the vapours of your discontent, I hereby appoint Henry to be the bailiff of my estates. *[HENRY and PERNILLA thank him.]*

Come now, friends, and let us all go in to celebrate our marriage.

II

CAPTAIN BOMBASTES
THUNDERTON

(DIDERICH MENSCHENSKRÆK)

A Comedy in Three Acts

FIRST PERFORMANCE

1724

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

BOMBASTES THUNDERTON, *a Captain just returned from the
Turkish war*

CHRISTOPHER WALLSMASHER, *his soldier-servant*

A LADY, *Thunderton's wife*

EPHRAIM, *a Jew*

HYACINTHE, *a young slave sold to Thunderton, but still in the
Jew's keeping*

JERONIMUS, *an old gentleman*

LEANDER, *his son*

HENRY, *Leander's servant*

ELVIRA, *a lady, sister to Jeronimus*

A CORPORAL

SCENE

VENICE, ABOUT 1718

BOMBASTES THUNDERTON

ACT I

SCENE 1

LEANDER. HENRY.

LEANDER. What o'clock is it, Henry ?

HENRY. Just the time we should see her at the window, sir.

LEANDER. The fiend seize that Jew !

HENRY. One ought not to curse one's neighbours and fellow-Christians, but I could not refrain this morning from cursing Ephraim.

LEANDER. He is so destitute of feeling that he threatened to complain to my father because I stood at the door and talked to the young lady, and he dragged her from the window, and swore she should no longer have leave to quit her room.

HENRY. There is no pity or Christian charity in a Jew. But how on earth did he get possession of this lovely young lady ?

LEANDER. She is a Venetian whose family lived in Dalmatia, and during the last war she was carried off prisoner and sold as a slave to the Jew by a Turkish merchant.

HENRY. But what good do you get, sir, by conversing with her ? It only excites your feelings and stirs your blood.

LEANDER. That cannot be helped, Henry. I must try and find out what the Jew means to do with her, and use your help to get her out of his clutches.

HENRY. You have a very high opinion of me ! Had I the intellect of twelve men, as they say a bear has, I could not cope with Ephraim. To get the better of a Jew requires more than a mortal brain.

LEANDER. You have a head capable of spinning a web to catch him in, and the will to run any risk for me.

HENRY. Will apart, I have such a longing to trip up the Jew, sir, that I should certainly do so at once, were I certain I should not be hanged to-morrow. But the young lady is at the window.

SCENE 2

HYACINTHE (*at the window*). LEANDER. HENRY.

HYACINTHE. Is it Leander I see ?

LEANDER. Dearest one !

HYACINTHE. How is my dear Leander ?

LEANDER. I have been at death's door ; but your presence, dearest, revives me.

HYACINTHE. But I cannot easily console you with my presence now.

LEANDER. No ; a thick wall divides us.

HYACINTHE. My tyrannical master makes it hard for me to see you.

LEANDER. What will be your fate ?

HYACINTHE. My blood runs cold when I think of it ! He has just told me that I am sold to an officer who saw me some time ago.

LEANDER. This is my death-warrant !

HYACINTHE. And I am to be handed over to him to-day.

LEANDER. Heavens !

HYACINTHE. Have you no counsel to offer me ?

LEANDER. I cannot help you, though I can help myself by putting an end to my wretched life !

HYACINTHE. Think not of it, but give me advice !

LEANDER. Henry, advise me !

HENRY. What advice can I give you, sir ?

LEANDER. Advise me, or you are a dead man !

HENRY. Why don't you jump up to her, sir ?

LEANDER. Are you mad ? Can I fly ?

HENRY. Can I squeeze through walls and doors ?

LEANDER (*drawing his sword*). Now for advice, or you die as you stand !

HENRY (*kneeling*). Ah, sir ! Satan, I believe, possesses you. Will you murder me because I cannot work impossibilities ?

LEANDER. Nonsense !

HYACINTHE. Dear Leander, do your servant no hurt. At least give him time to think.

LEANDER. Come, stand up. Will you invent a plan ?

HENRY. Well, there's some reason in that ; but you might as well say, Ram your head through the wall, or blow up half a dozen locks, or jump to the moon, as say, Bring me this instant a young lady what's locked up.

LEANDER. Oh, Henry ! all my hopes hang on you.

HENRY. So I thought when you drew your sword to run me through.

LEANDER. My affection drove me mad. But will you help me ?

HYACINTHE. Retire for a little, and give him time to collect his thoughts.

LEANDER. Let me kiss your hand, dearest, before I go.

HENRY. This is enough to drive one mad. Just as well say, Chop off your hand, dearest, and chuck it in the gutter, that I may kiss it ! If you were on stilts, sir, you might come near it.

LEANDER. Ah, that is true ; but——

HENRY. If it will help you, I'll lift you up on my head.

LEANDER. Try if you can.

[HENRY lifts him up on his head.]

SCENE 3

JEW, AND THE PREVIOUS PERSONS.

JEW. Hey ! help ! help !

[HENRY and LEANDER fall down, and then
get up and run away. HYACINTHE re-
tires from the window.]

Ha, ha ! a nice fellow ! But I shall put a spoke
in his wheel ! And you, Mamshell, you shall have
your deserts, I can tell ye. I'd rather have to guard
a house full of jewelry than one young Mish ! They're
dangerous goods, explosive commodities ! But I
must go and report this to his father, who lives
opposite. [Knocks at JERONIMUS' door.]

SCENE 4

JEW. JERONIMUS.

JERONIMUS. Good-morning, Ephraim ; do you
want me ? I have no business in the exchange line
to-day.

JEW. Nor I neither. I want to make a complaint
to you. I am not safe in my house, and I must leave
the neighbourhood.

JERONIMUS. Does anything in the neighbourhood
annoy you ?

JEW. Your son and his servant want to take a girl
from my house by force.

JERONIMUS. What ! Is this the truth ?

JEW. Only a moment ago I caught them making a fresh attempt. But your son will draw a long face when he hears that I shall hand her over this very afternoon to an officer, who will pay me down the money for her.

JERONIMUS. Is it possible that my only son is such a profligate ? I shall be only too happy, dear Ephraim, to hear she has left your house, for I shall have no rest while she remains there.

JEW. There is no fear. I will not cross my threshold until the officer's servant comes for her.

JERONIMUS. Off with you, Ephraim ; and let me know how matters go.

JEW. Good-bye for the present.

[Goes into his house.]

JERONIMUS. Leander ! Henry ! Come here, you scoundrels !

SCENE 5

JERONIMUS. LEANDER. HENRY.

JERONIMUS. Ah, there you are, worthless loafers ! This is fine news I hear about you.

HENRY. What harm have we done, sir ? The whole morning we have been occupied in study.

JERONIMUS. Hold your tongue, you beast ! My stick will shortly be acquainted with your back.

LEANDER. Why is Papa so angry with us ?

JERONIMUS. Oh, for a mere trifle, seeing you are a rake, a debauchee, a housebreaker—a highwayman !

LEANDER. These are hard words, which I do not deserve.

JERONIMUS. Do you know the man who lives opposite ?

[*Points to the house.*]

LEANDER. Yes ; he is a Jew.

JERONIMUS. And do you also know the young person who resides there ?

LEANDER. No, I assure you I don't.

JERONIMUS (*aside*). Clearly, he will dare to deny what he has just done !

HENRY (*to LEANDER*). Oh, sir, speak out straightforward. You have nothing to be ashamed of.—Hear me, Mr. Jeronimus ! It is not my place to defend my young master, but this much I may say : The Jew has bought a young lady of quality, with whom your son is madly in love, and poor I am manœuvring to get her out of the Jew's clutches. There, now, is the whole affair out, and it ought to gladden a father's heart.

JERONIMUS. To the devil with you ! It ought to gladden a father's heart, ought it ?

HENRY. Of course it ought to gladden a father's heart to learn that his son is following in his footsteps.¹ Have you not told us yourself how in your youth you fell madly in love with some foreign young lady of quality ?

¹ Idne tu miraris si patrissat filius ? (Plautus, *Pseudolus*, i. 5).

JERONIMUS (*raising his stick*). Does the dog dare to upbraid me because——

HENRY. Very far from it. I spoke it to your credit, sir; for I would not give sixpence for a young man without a love-affair.

JERONIMUS. There are love-affairs and love-affairs. But the present one is a scandalous attachment to a female whom no one knows. I was wild in my youth, I admit, but I have truly repented of my sins.

HENRY. And my young master will truly repent of his sins too, when he is old.

JERONIMUS (*aside*). This infernal flunkey will drive me mad!

HENRY. Ah, Mr. Jeronimus, let my master sow his wild oats. A young man without a love-affair has nothing to talk about with his comrades, and must sit like Silence on a monument. For my part, I should rather be looked on as a scoundrel than that it should be said I had never been in love.

JERONIMUS. Listen, fellow, to something that will put your master's nose out of joint, and yours too. This female will be packed off this afternoon to the officer who has bought her, and the Jew will not stir out of his house until he has got her safely off his hands. Therefore I can take my ease; for were there any danger of it, I should consider it my duty to prevent the escape. [*Goes into his house.*]

SCENE 6

LEANDER. HENRY.

HENRY. Therefore I cannot take my ease, for I consider it my duty to aid her escape.

LEANDER. Ah, Henry, I don't see how you can compass it.

HENRY. Were you not my master, I should say you were as stupid as an oyster ; and since you are my master, I dare not compare you to a horse, for I know the respect due to a master from his servant. When all was hopeless, you threatened to run me through the body unless I helped you on the spot, and now, when there is a chance of success, you tell me it is impossible.

LEANDER. You may call me all the names you can coin, provided you help me. But what is your plan ?

HENRY. If I explained it, you would not understand it. All you have got to do is to go across to the neighbour who lives next door to the Jew, and persuade him to let me make use of his house ; and, in addition, you must get me both a Jew's costume and a soldier's uniform, for I act in both characters to-day. Now, off and do so, for time is precious.

ACT II

SCENE 1

HENRY (*alone*).

HENRY. I must pass off as a soldier-servant to-day even though I should lose my dinner by it. If the Captain's servant knows the Jew, I shall give myself out as the Jew's brother, with full authority to hand over the young lady. If he doesn't know the Jew, I shall pass off as the Jew himself. But what does this lady want here ?

SCENE 2

HENRY. OFFICER'S WIFE.

LADY (*aside*). How unfortunate are we wives of officers ! We seldom see our husbands ; and when they do return home, they bring slaves with them.

HENRY (*aside*). Whoo ! Why, she may be the wife of the very officer who has bought the young lady.

LADY (*aside*). I am told that the wanton woman he has bought is now housed by this Jew.

HENRY (*aside*). Hurrah ! a new device has occurred to me.

LADY (*aside*). Here will I wait till the servant comes to fetch her, and I shall call on the people for help to stop the whole affair. Ah, unhappy woman that I am !

HENRY (*aside*). I must have a little talkee-talkee with her. (*Aloud.*) May I ask what is the matter with you, lady, you seem so distressed ?

LADY. Ah, friend, pray assist me, and I shall reward you for your trouble.

HENRY. My poor services are at your command.

LADY. My husband will be home from the army to-day, and I understand that he has purchased some abandoned hussy now living with this Jew, and will send for her to-day. Oh, dear man, stand by me and prevent them by main force from taking her away.

HENRY. Dear lady, you have arrived in the nick of time. I shall loiter about here, and help you when the moment comes.

LADY. I thank you heartily.

HENRY. I desire no thanks, for I am playing for my own hand, not yours, lady.

LADY. Indeed !

HENRY. My young master is madly in love with this same young lady ; and on hearing of her intended removal this afternoon, he sent me here to hoodwink the soldier-servant and prevent his getting her.

LADY. Is this possible ? Well, listen to a word of advice. It will be best for us to lurk about here until the servant comes and brings her out-of-doors. Then I will raise an alarm, and in the confusion you can hurry her off.

HENRY. No, dear lady, we must take another course. The Jew is well known in the neighbourhood, for every householder in the street has the honour of paying him 12 per cent. on loans. My master's father, who has an inkling of the love-affair, will help Ephraim to the utmost. So all your plan would lead to would be, that you would be fined, I should be imprisoned, and the Jew would take his young lady back. You, lady, I see, are accustomed to operations in the field, where the soldiers make straight for the enemy ; but much marching and countermarching is necessary in street fighting before we gain our object. However, I will strain every nerve to carry out our object.

LADY. Heaven grant that you may succeed !

HENRY. We will succeed. But please tell me your husband's name.

LADY. Bombastes Thunderton.

HENRY. Oh, good Lord ! If that was cut on a stone, you might kill an English bull with it !

LADY. The name is imposing, it is true, and my husband often jokes about it, as he does about everything.

HENRY. Pray listen, lady. This afternoon the young lady will be, I hope, in my safe keeping, and

you, dressed after the manner of slaves, will be led away by the soldier-servant.

LADY. O gracious ! that would be a bold step !

HENRY. I am all for bold steps. Will you please to step into this house, where I can clearly explain what you have to do ?

LADY. There is no time to lose, for I have discovered that before an hour the servant——

HENRY. Is he a very intellectual person ?

LADY. This will prove to you that he is none of the sharpest. He was formerly a drummer and regimental postman. Observing that all the letters addressed to officers bore the words Royal Blazers—the title of our regiment—he took it into his head that all letters whatever should bear these words ; and once, when he had occasion to write to one Slogger, a country farmer, he addressed his letter to “ Mr. Slogger, Farmer, Royal Blazers.”

HENRY. Ha, ha ! that’s good enough for me. But let us go in. [*They enter the house next the JEW’S.*]

SCENE 3

JERONIMUS. ELVIRA. —

JERONIMUS. Is it not an abominable transaction ? But I observe they are all gone away.

ELVIRA. You are always croaking, dear brother. Surely this is a thing that happens to every man.

JERONIMUS. I feel the approach of misfortune just as some men have a presentiment of approaching illness. For instance, just before I had the pleasure of receiving you, dear sister, into this house, I had cramp in the great toe of my right foot ; and whenever this odious cramp returns, I become aware of the approach of some vexation which never fails to arrive. At this moment, although the Jew is alert on his post, and my son's face is as long as your arm, yet his audacious attempt still worries me.

ELVIRA. My dear brother, you take the world too seriously. I too have had my sorrows—very different from yours. Within one year I lost the two persons I loved best in the world—my husband, who was killed in battle ; and my only daughter Leonora, who in her tender years was carried into slavery by barbarians.

JERONIMUS. You certainly have had pretty bad luck ; but, believe me, it is worse to keep a profligate son than to lose him.

ELVIRA. Oh, bother your son ! Can any sorrow be compared with the loss of a husband, the slavery of a daughter, and the pillage of one's house ?

JERONIMUS. Perhaps not ; but day after day am I harassed and grieved by an immoral son. A sorrow, however great, may at length be forgotten, but I am daily plagued by misconduct which sours my temper. You certainly lost your dear husband and daughter, but as an offset you sold your large

property in Dalmatia at such profit that you can live in style here in Venice.

ELVIRA. I can live in style, but never in contentment. Ah ! were Heaven to grant me a knowledge of where my darling daughter is, I would spend every penny I possess to free her.

JERONIMUS. Would it were so ! for I destined her, with your kind consent, for Leander. But for her loss he would never have fallen into this mischief. By my reckoning, poor Leonora must be now sixteen.

ELVIRA. Have you noted the date of her birth ?

JERONIMUS. Yes. Among other remarkable things I have entered the birth of your child and of my own. I shall soon find them. [*Turns over the leaves of a diary.*] They are certainly here. I must read this page through. [*Reads.*] “21st January. Between nine o’clock and ten the sky was overcast with dark clouds which threatened rain, but none fell. 22nd ditto. A very misty day.”

ELVIRA. Why on earth record such trifles ?

JERONIMUS. Wait a moment, and I shall find the place. [*Reads.*] “24th ditto. Saw a pretty girl in the market-place, and persuaded her to—” No, that can’t be it.

ELVIRA. Pray finish the last entry, so that I may learn some of your old exploits, and use them when you carp at Leander.

JERONIMUS. One moment, dear sister, and I shall find it. [*Reads.*] “24th ditto. The holy brother

Alfonso mocked and taunted me in public. Note this down lest I may forget to revenge myself."

ELVIRA. A truly Christian entry !

JERONIMUS. Do have a moment's patience. [*Reads.*] "25th ditto. Lost the heel of one of my shoes and—" This cannot be right. [*Reads.*] "26th ditto. I dreamt that—" It must be on one of these pages. [*Mumbles through a page.*] Ah ! here it is ! [*Reads.*] "28th ditto. My sister was safely delivered of a daughter, to be christened Leonora. May she grow up virtuous and modest, to the joy of her family and friends. Amen." I knew it was here, but all the same something is wanting.

ELVIRA. What is it ?

JERONIMUS. There ought to be another entry on the same page, to this effect : "On the same date my dear son Leander was changed into a wer-wolf."

ELVIRA. Oh, do not speak so bitterly !

JERONIMUS. Had the change actually taken place, I should have been saved this daily misery.

ELVIRA. Dear brother, time brings a gift of tears. Let us go in.

SCENE 4

HENRY (*dressed as a Jew*). CHRISTOPHER WALL-SMASHER.

HENRY (*aside*). I thought I saw through the window a visage encircled with whiskers. Ah ! there it is,

by Jove ! An ugly devil, who gapes and stares at this house. If it were only he !

CHRISTOPHER (*to himself*). I have the street, if I could only find the house.

HENRY (*aside*). You shall find it right enough.

CHRISTOPHER (*to himself*). I have never been in this town before.

HENRY (*aside*). The easier it will be to decoy you.

CHRISTOPHER (*to himself*). It would be a real treat to sack such a city.

HENRY (*aside*). And it will be a real treat to swindle such a ninny. But I had better tackle him at once. (*Aloud.*) Good morning, sir. A stranger, I should think. May I ask to whom I speak ?

CHRISTOPHER. Does no one live in this street ?

HENRY. Oh yes ; at least I live in it.

CHRISTOPHER. I have a letter for a man in this street.

HENRY. Is not the man one of the children of Israel ?

CHRISTOPHER. No, I think he is a Jew.

HENRY. Well, the children of Israel are Jews.

CHRISTOPHER. I never knew that before.

HENRY. Are you the servant of Captain Thunderton ?

CHRISTOPHER. Right you are. I believe I have found the man I was looking for.

HENRY. My name is Ephraim.

CHRISTOPHER. That's it. Let us see the address.
[*Reads.*] "Mister—mister—Ephraim, Jewish—mer-

chant.” That’s all right. I was told he lived somewhere here.

HENRY. Yes, that is my house. But what is your name, sir ?

CHRISTOPHER. Christopher Wallsmasher. Won’t you read the letter ?

HENRY. I know what it’s about. You are to take off a young lady from my house.

CHRISTOPHER. That’s about it; and here’s the handle of the Captain’s whip as a token.

HENRY. Good.—Hey ! Hyacinthe, come out ! She’ll be here at once.

SCENE 5

WOMAN (*in slave’s dress, with thick veil*). HENRY.

CHRISTOPHER.

HENRY. See here, Hyacinthe, you are to follow this man.

CHRISTOPHER. Is she pretty, Ephraim ?

HENRY. Well, I suppose your master thinks so, or he would not have parted so freely.

CHRISTOPHER. How much did you sell her for ?

HENRY. Twenty ducats down, and I am to get one hundred and twenty in all. I have often had dealings with your master without written agreement.

CHRISTOPHER. I must put her in lodgings in the town, for his wife must know nothing about the affair.

HENRY. Is she a jealous woman ?

CHRISTOPHER. Yes ; but it is not for the like of me to talk about her.

HENRY. I swear by our god Mahometh, and our holy Jewish Scriptures, Alkoranometh——

CHRISTOPHER. Well, she's a reg'lar she-ass. I shouldn't mind her but that she's so old and ugly. And if my master does buy a slave, why shouldn't he have one as well as the other officers of the regiment ?

HENRY. Just so.

CHRISTOPHER. Let the hag prowl and pry to her heart's content, for we'll cheat her in the end. Good-bye, Ephraim. My master will see you in about half an hour, to pay up.

HENRY. Good-bye, Christopher Wallsmasher. (*Alone.*) This last bit of information tempts me to try a new joke and get hold of the money the Jew should have. Mr. Leander, come out !

SCENE 6

HENRY. LEANDER.

LEANDER. Is she gone ?

HENRY. She is so. The first act of the comedy is over, but the poor soldier-servant will get into an awful row for the way he spoke about his mistress. Now, sir, you keep watch here until I change my disguise. [*Goes in.*]

LEANDER (*alone*). The officer will be deceived for

certain. Would that it could assist me ! The scheme seems practicable, but what I dread is that the Jew may recognise Henry. However, he is adroit, and can alter his voice. The Jew has only seen him once before, and in his disguise Henry is almost unrecognisable. Oh, that we may succeed ! I live between hope and fear, and every second seems an eternity to me. If I fail, I shall take my life. Into no man's soul has love sunk so deep as into mine. But who comes here ?

SCENE 7

HENRY (*in military uniform, with whiskers*).

LEANDER. *Afterwards the Jew.*

LEANDER. To the devil with you, Henry ; I did not recognise you again.

HENRY. Go in again, sir, until I come with the booty.

LEANDER. Good luck to you ! *[Goes in.*

HENRY. Now the game's alive. I must be rough and boorish, that I may the better deceive the Jew.

[Knocks loudly at the Jew's door.

JEW (*within*). What is the noise at my door ?

HENRY. Open the door, you dog, or I'll bring the house down !

JEW (*within*). Who are you ?

HENRY. I am Christopher Wallsmasher.

JEW (*within*). That's a remarkable name.

HENRY. That name is never mentioned but with respect. Open !

JEW (*within*). Have a little patience, sir.

HENRY. Patience indeed ! I am an officer !

JEW (*within*). And I am a citizen of this town.

HENRY. That is, you are Stiggins the hatter, and I am Alexander the Great ! Open, or you are a dead man !

JEW (*enters*). What may you want, sir ?

HENRY. Do you not know Christopher Wall-smasher ?

JEW. No, sir.

HENRY. Have you never read my name in the *Military Gazette* ?

JEW. No, Mr. Wallsmasher.

HENRY. Then you can never have heard of the battle of Ragusa !

JEW. Never.

HENRY. The townspeople are as stupid as oxen.

JEW. A Jew has brains enough. I know some things you don't know.

HENRY. Pray, what are they ? Listen, dog ; What is a counterscarp ?

JEW. I don't know.

HENRY. A ravelin ? ¹

JEW. I don't know.

¹ This question is asked and answered in Farquhar's comedy *The Recruiting Officer*, iii. 7 :—

“ *Bullock, a peasant*. Pray, sir, what is a ravelin ?

“ *Sergeant Kite*. Why, 'tis a modern minced pie, but the crust is confounded hard, and the plums are hard of digestion.”

HENRY. A company-square ?

JEW. I cannot say.

HENRY. A regimental sawbones ?

JEW. I have no notion.

HENRY. An attack with petards ?

JEW. I am not a man of war.

HENRY. An escort, a battelon, a squadron, a quarter-guard, an ass's-bridge, a drum-camp, a war-commissary ?

JEW. Sir, I don't understand the language of the field.

HENRY. Then you are worse than the beasts of the field.

JEW. Why are you so angry with me, sir ?

HENRY. If I were really angry, I should let you know it. We soldiers speak in this way when we are in the best of humours. By-the-by, I have a letter for some one who lives somewhere here, a Jew or Turk.

JEW. There is a Jew living here. But from whom is the letter ?

HENRY. I serve Captain Thunderton.

JEW. Is the Jew called Ephraim ?

HENRY. Yes.

JEW. I am the man. [*Reads the letter, and says*] Quite right ; you are to take a young woman from here. Everything can be got for money. I see you carry the handle of a whip, which I was told would be the Captain's token.

HENRY. I fear, sir, I have been somewhat hasty.

BUT without sounding my own trumpet I can say, on my soul, that I am the bravest man in the whole bastion—one who can hold my own against sixteen at a time. Therefore Captain Thunderton has especially selected me to carry out this important commission.

JEW. Will you step indoors ?

SCENE 8

JERONIMUS (*alone*).

JERONIMUS. What the devil was all this disturbance about in the Jew's house ? Not a soul to be seen ! I do hope that neither my son nor Henry has slipped into his house and carried off the wench. Oh ! some one coming out—an officer's servant, I am ashamed to say. But the battle is won ! I shall stay here and see the end of it.

SCENE 9

HENRY (*as CHRISTOPHER WALLSMASHER*). JEW.

HYACINTHE. JERONIMUS.

JEW. There, now, is the girl for you, Christopher Wallsmasher. Take you good care of her, or a certain somebody may relieve you of your charge.

HENRY. Were Lucifer himself to attempt it, I should repulse him. What kind of fellow might somebody be ?

JERONIMUS. Good-afternoon, and good luck to you, Ephraim.

JEW. Oh, here is somebody's father.

HENRY (*aside*). Curse the old dog for putting in his oar ! (*Aloud.*) Are you the scoundrel's father ?

JEW. Yes. But listen, Christopher Wallsmasher.

HENRY. Are you his father ?

JEW. Do listen !

HENRY. The dog shall die !

[*Draws his sword. JERONIMUS gets behind the JEW. HENRY thrashes them with the flat of his sword, and throws them into the street.*]

JEW. Ah, ah ! what evil have I done ?

HENRY. By your leave, Ephraim ; it is only the old knave I want to do for.

JEW (*kneeling*). Ah, Mr. Christopher Wallsmasher, spare my life !

HENRY. He would take from my master what he prizes as his life.

JEW. Do listen !

HENRY. But he shall learn that we officers are not to be trifled with.

JEW. One word, sir !

HENRY. You ought to help me to brain him !

JEW. Vouchsafe me speak a word !

HENRY. I am the card to slice his head off, had he the neck of an English bull !

JEW. But he is on our side !

HENRY. Is he not the father of the fellow who——

JEW. Yes ; but he is furious against his son for attempting it.

HENRY. Oh, that is another pair of shoes. I must beg his pardon.

JERONIMUS. You can do me no greater service than by hurrying the girl off to your master ; for I fear she may fall into the hands of my son's servant.

HENRY. There is my hand on it, sir. Let me catch the servant attempting it, were there twenty others behind him.

JERONIMUS. There are a brace of ducats for you to take charge of also.

HENRY. Your servant, sir ; and if I can serve you in any other way, it will be a pleasure to me.

JERONIMUS. Farewell, Mr. Wallsmasher.

[HYACINTHE weeps ; but HENRY touches her on the ear, and she becomes silent, and exit with him.]

SCENE 10

JEW. JERONIMUS.

JERONIMUS. I can assure you, Ephraim, I never in my life received a beating with greater pleasure, and I hope you will say the same thing.

JEW. The devil himself was here, but no pleasure !

JERONIMUS. He seemed to me an honest as well as a powerful fellow. So he is not likely to let his prey escape from him or to undersell her.

JEW. That is all very well, Mr. Jeronimus, but I feel what I feel.

JERONIMUS. But I got the worst of it.

JEW. Well, you deserved to get the worst of it, as your son's nearest relation. But oh ! my shoulder, my shoulder ! Devil seize Christopher Wallsmasher !

JERONIMUS. Don't swear at him, for he is an honest creature.

JEW. Just a little too honest, sir—a little too honest.

JERONIMUS. How Henry will hang his head when he learns all this ! But here comes my sister back again.

SCENE 11

ELVIRA. JERONIMUS. JEW.

ELVIRA. Well, brother, how are matters going ?

JERONIMUS. Very well indeed, although my back is as tender as *bœuf à la mode*.

ELVIRA. What ! Have you been beaten in your old age ?

JERONIMUS. I have indeed.

ELVIRA. By whom ?

JERONIMUS. By Christopher Wallsmasher.

ELVIRA. And who in Heaven's name is Christopher Wallsmasher ?

JERONIMUS. I gave him two ducats into the

bargain for hitting so hard, on my behalf and this man's here.

ELVIRA. Did I not know you were a sober man, I should certainly suppose you had been drinking.

JERONIMUS. I shall tell you what happened. An officer's servant has just taken off the girl to his master, and a load has been lifted from my mind. This same servant, on hearing from Ephraim that I was the father of the youth who had been hanging about the girl, got quite furious from zeal, and nearly murdered me. Therefore I do not regret——

ELVIRA. I am sorry, my dear, that some one has played a practical joke on you. The words "Wall-smasher" and "zeal" are very unusual, and it occurs to me that Henry has dressed some one up to play the soldier.

EPHRAIM. Oh no ; on my soul all is fair and square. I know the Captain's handwriting, and here is his letter about this and other things.

ELVIRA. Well, I congratulate you ; but I have other matters to speak about.

JERONIMUS. Will you walk in, and we can converse at our ease.
[*They go in.*]

ACT III

SCENE 1

HENRY (*alone*).

HENRY. Triumph ! The young lady is safe in my master's hands ! The toss is won, but the story is not ended. I now appear as a Jew, to lay hands on the money the Captain is about to pay Ephraim. My pranks are endless, but this will be the very last one, just to finish the comedy. But I hear voices. Ah ! here comes Christopher Wallsmasher with his master.

SCENE 2

HENRY. OFFICER.¹ CHRISTOPHER.

OFFICER. Christopher !

CHRISTOPHER. Sir !

OFFICER. Which is the house ?

CHRISTOPHER. The one at the corner.

OFFICER. Have you brought the young lady to the lodgings in the market ?

¹ *i.e.* Captain Thunderton.

CHRISTOPHER. Yes, sir ; but there is the Jew at his door.

OFFICER. Good ! I shall now pay him, and ask him not to mention the affair to anybody.—Sir, I am the person who arranged with your agent in Dalmatia about the sale of a female slave.

HENRY. Quite so, noble Captain.

OFFICER. The agent told me she belonged to you.

HENRY. Yes, sir. He was Levi, my agent.

OFFICER. I come now to pay for her.

HENRY. Thanks, brave sir.

OFFICER. And I have to thank you for giving me credit, though you did not know me.

HENRY. It is no merit, sir, to trust a rich and famous man.

OFFICER. I must ask you, dear Ephraim, to keep the transaction secret.

HENRY. Be assured of that, sir, for I should lose my business if I let my tongue wag.

SCENE 3

THE SAME. EPHRAIM. A CORPORAL.

EPHRAIM (*coming out of JERONIMUS' house*). Adieu, Mr. Jeronimus ; I am much obliged. But who have we here ?

HENRY (*aside*). Oh, the devil ! Here is the Jew himself. Now the fat is in the fire !

OFFICER. Your agent got twenty ducats down.

HENRY. Quite so, sir.

EPHRAIM (*aside*). What the deuce is going on here ?

OFFICER. Well, here is the balance of the 120 ducats.

HENRY. Many thanks, sir.

EPHRAIM (*aside*). What mischief is brewing here ?

OFFICER. The price is high, but the lady is pretty.

HENRY. A charming creature—quite charming.

EPHRAIM (*aside*). Am I awake or asleep ?

OFFICER. But, Ephraim, remember your promise of silence.

HENRY. Trust me about that, sir.

EPHRAIM (*aside*). I shall go mad ! I am swindled !
(*Aloud.*) Brave Captain, I am Ephraim, the Jew, who sold the slave.

HENRY. You are a regular devil ! I know you !

EPHRAIM. Am I not Ephraim ? I must know who I am.

OFFICER. What the deuce does all this mean ?

HENRY. He is a disguised soldier, sir, a professional thief.

OFFICER. Oh, you shall get your desert !

EPHRAIM. Noble warrior, believe him not.

HENRY. The honour of the Hebrew race is often tarnished by scoundrels who masquerade in our peculiar dress.

OFFICER. True enough ! Hey, dog ! from what regiment have you deserted ?

EPHRAIM. As sure as I am an honest man, I am Ephraim, the Jew, and I live in that house.

HENRY. Ha, ha, ha ! Capital ! “ As true as you are an honest man ! ” But that remains to be proved.

EPHRAIM. Believe him not, sir. I can prove I am the real Ephraim. I can prove that three days ago the young woman was sold by my agent ; that in my name he received twenty ducats down ; that the wench is called Hyacinthe ; and that your servant showed me your whip-handle, the token we agreed on.

OFFICER. Has a second Ephraim been raised by magic ? Which is the natural man, and which the spirit ?

HENRY. Heavens ! the villain has wormed out all the circumstances, to cheat you, noble sir, and me, poor man. A foul bird ! a foul bird !

OFFICER. I can soon settle the matter. Christopher, from whom did you get the young woman ?

CHRISTOPHER (*pointing to HENRY*). From him.

OFFICER. If you lie, it may cost you your life.

CHRISTOPHER. May I be hanged if this is not the real Ephraim and that fellow a swindler.

EPHRAIM. The high Heaven take pity on me !

CHRISTOPHER. I do believe he was a dragoon in Captain Fire-eater's troop. I'm blowed if it's not the same ! Are you not Ananias Harkaway ?

EPHRAIM. I swear by heaven and earth I am the real Ephraim !

HENRY. Christopher Wallsmasher is right. I now remember that his name is Ananias Harkaway.

CHRISTOPHER. I recognised the fellow straight off !
Have you the seal, Ephraim ?

HENRY. Yes ; here it is. Are you now sure, sir,
who I am ? ¹

OFFICER. Here, Corporal !

CORPORAL. Sir !

OFFICER. Make this fellow a prisoner ! A soldier
in disguise !

[CORPORAL removes EPHRAIM, who cries
"Woe ! woe !"]

Is he not an infernal scoundrel ?

HENRY. There is a numerous criminal class in this
city.

OFFICER. Here is the money I owe you, Ephraim.

HENRY. Thanks, noble sir ; but there was no
hurry about it. Permit me to say farewell. [*Exit.*]

SCENE 4

JERONIMUS. ELVIRA. OFFICER. CHRISTOPHER.

JERONIMUS. The housemaid said there was some
disturbance outside, but all is still now.

¹ This point is somewhat obscure. By asking for the " seal " Christopher meant—" Have you the letter written to you by the Captain, which was sealed by the impression previously agreed upon between you two ? " This is quite clear from the *Pseudolus* of Plautus, iv. 2 :—

" miles lenoni Ballioni epistolam
conscriptam mittit Polymachæroplacides,
imagine obsignatam, quæ inter nos duo
convenit olim."

OFFICER (*to CHRISTOPHER*). Say nothing about the disturbance, here or elsewhere, as the matter must be kept quiet.

ELVIRA (*to herself*). I surely ought to know this officer—Captain Thunderton.

THUNDERTON (*to himself*). I must have met this lady in Dalmatia.

ELVIRA. Captain Thunderton !

THUNDERTON. Madame Elvira !

[*They shake hands.*]

I had the honour to call on you once in Dalmatia.

ELVIRA. I well remember the visit, but the honour was mine. Since then I have had sad misfortunes. My house was pillaged, and my people carried into slavery.

THUNDERTON. That could not have happened during my time there, for my name was such a terror to the Turks they would never have ventured on plundering expeditions. They had enough of that game. I assure you that in one foray we accounted for 20,000 of them, and in one short month this right arm laid over 2,000 Janissaries low. Was it not so, Christopher ? ¹

CHRISTOPHER. Certainly, sir.

¹ Thunderton, like the “*Miles Gloriosus*” of Plautus, tells outrageous and unadorned lies. Falstaff, and Captain Bobadil of Jonson’s *Every Man in his Humour*, and Thackeray’s Major Gahagan tell picturesque lies. Captain Bluffe, of Congreve’s *Old Bachelor*, is a polite liar, and gloomily refers to the exploits and unrequited services of “one who shall be nameless.”

THUNDERTON. It was for this reason the General nicknamed me Thunderton.

ELVIRA. Was it so, indeed ?

THUNDERTON. Yes, indeed. And at a levée the General was gracious enough to say to the Duke of Dalmatia, " Will your Highness permit me to present to you the second Scanderbeg,¹ the scourge of the Turks ? "

ELVIRA. Indeed !

THUNDERTON. For me there is no such pleasure in the world as to meet, single-handed, a whole company of armed Turks. Is not this true, Christopher ?

CHRISTOPHER. Certainly, sir.

THUNDERTON. I was about to give the *coup-de-grâce* on one occasion to the Vizier, Mahomed Podolski, when whiz came a bombshell and knocked my hand back. He escaped that time, but it was a very short respite. I shall never forget how he yelled in Turkish, " Ach, la, la, la ! "

ELVIRA. What does that mean ?

THUNDERTON. It means, " Help, great Mahomed, against the mighty champion, Thunderton ! "

ELVIRA. Can so much be expressed in so few words ?

THUNDERTON. Yes ; Turkish is a very powerful language.²

¹ Scanderbeg = Iskender beg = Lord Alexander. For his exploits against the Turks, see Gibbon's *History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, vii. 150, Bury's ed.

² " *Cléonte. Bel men.*

" *Covielle. Il dit que vous alliez vite avec lui vous préparer*

ELVIRA. May I venture to ask why you visited our poor street to-day ?

THUNDERTON. Madame Elvira, you are an honourable lady, who will not, I know, repeat what I tell you. Some little time ago I bought a slave, a young lady, in camp from the agent of the Jew who lives opposite.

ELVIRA. Good gracious ! It was you, then, who bought the young person ?

THUNDERTON. Will this good gentleman [*pointing to JERONIMUS*] hold his peace ?

ELVIRA. I will answer for him, Captain.

THUNDERTON. But I observe a maidservant listening at the door. Can I rely on her silence ?

JERONIMUS. That is famous ! She is so discreet, you might swear she was not a servant !

THUNDERTON. Well, then, this day my servant, Christopher Wallsmasher, removed the lady.

ELVIRA. Can she speak Italian ?

THUNDERTON. Oh yes, she is an Italian.

ELVIRA. You will confer on me the greatest obligation by allowing me to have a few moments' conversation with her. She may be able to give me some tidings of my people who were captured and enslaved.

pour la cérémonie, afin de voir ensuite votre fille, et de conclure le mariage.

“ *M. Jourdain*. Tant de choses en deux mots !

“ *Covielle*. Oui, la langue turque est comme cela ; elle dit beaucoup en peu de paroles.”

—Molière, *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*, iv. 4.

THUNDERTON. With all the pleasure in the world. Christopher, go at once and bring the young lady here. *[Exit CHRISTOPHER.]*

ELVIRA. Is she far off ?

THUNDERTON. Oh no, between this and the market. I put her to board with a good friend ; for my wife, of course, must know nothing of the transaction.

ELVIRA. I should not have supposed that such a man as you, Captain, was afraid of his wife.

THUNDERTON. Well, perhaps not. The whole household trembles at my frown.

JERONIMUS *(aside)*. I shall bring Leander and Henry in to show them the muscular development of their rival, and put a damper on their intrigues.

[Exit.]

ELVIRA. How much, may I ask, did you pay for the lady ?

THUNDERTON. One hundred and twenty ducats.

ELVIRA. Then she must be lovely.

[Enter JERONIMUS, LEANDER, and HENRY.]

THUNDERTON. I do not believe that Venus herself is so perfect. But who are these two persons ?

SCENE 5

LEANDER. HENRY *(in his livery)*. JERONIMUS.

OFFICER. ELVIRA.

JERONIMUS. Only my son and his servant.

OFFICER. And can they tie up their tongues ?

JERONIMUS. I will go bail for that.—I have brought you two here to confound you, by showing you what sort of rival you have to deal with.

OFFICER. Well, gentlemen, as I have told you so much of the story, I may as well finish it. Just now you heard an uproar outside. Really it was a most unpleasant business, and nearly cost me 120 rix-dollars. Some sharper had dressed himself up as a Jew— But here comes the young lady.

SCENE 6

A LADY (*in slave's dress, thickly veiled*), AND THE
FOREGOING.

THUNDERTON. Welcome, my heart's delight !

ELVIRA. My heart bleeds to see an enslaved lady.

THUNDERTON. Do you think it a sin for a man with an elderly and toothless wife to buy a slave ?

ELVIRA. It seems to be a common practice.

THUNDERTON. I married a lady well stricken in years for her money, and I look on her merely as my housekeeper. This time-worn relic of the past, I find, is dreadfully jealous—not that it matters much. But you will now behold a face which it is a privilege to see.—Raise your veil, dearest Hyacinthe, and let me salute you.

[*He advances to salute her, when the lady, raising her veil, discloses the ancient visage of his wife, and gives him a box on the ear.*]

A—h ! what is this ?

[He falls on his knees, and she begins to flog him with a whip she brought with her.]

A—h ! dearest wife, will you flog me to death ?

JERONIMUS. Is it possible, Captain Thunderton, that you——

OFFICER *(his wife still belabouring him)*. A—h !

ELVIRA. What a sight, Captain Thunderton !

OFFICER *(his wife still lashing him)*. A—h !

JERONIMUS. What has become of your prowess, Captain ?

ELVIRA. Has your courage oozed through the tips of your fingers ?

JERONIMUS. Think of the battle of Ragusa, Captain Scanderbeg !

ELVIRA. Think of the Grand Vizier, you terror of the Turks !

THUNDERTON. Dear wife, I will never do it again !

JERONIMUS. Christopher Wallsmasher, will you not help your master ?

CHRISTOPHER. No, sir ; my courage has oozed away too. I am only good for fair fighting in the open field.

JERONIMUS. Really, madam, you shall beat your husband no longer. *[Goes between them.]*

ELVIRA. A truly creditable scene !

CHRISTOPHER. Some infernal joke must have been played. I believe the fellow we arrested as a thief is the real Ephraim. I shall go straight to him. *[Exit.]*

[His wife again attacks THUNDERTON, and they are again separated.]

JERONIMUS. This is really a shocking business.

ELVIRA. A large display of woman's guile somewhere !

JERONIMUS. But how did it all come about ?

OFFICER. I—do hold my wife fast !—I don't know. The Jew who lives in that house there must have been in league with my wife.

JERONIMUS. But no Jew ever lived in that house. The Jew lives next door to it.

OFFICER. In that case the fellow I supposed to be Ephraim was an impostor.

ELVIRA. Had you dealings with two Jews ?

OFFICER. But there were two Jews, each of whom swore he was the right Jew. Here comes the second Ephraim.

SCENE 7

THE JEW. CHRISTOPHER. THE FOREGOING.

EPHRAIM. Alas and alas ! what fraud ! what swindling !

HENRY (*aside*). Now screw up your courage, Henry !

JERONIMUS. Here at last is the real Jew. What is the meaning of all this, Ephraim ?

EPHRAIM. I do not know.

LADY. On coming here to foil a plot I had discovered, I met a servant who at once offered to help me. He brought me into that house there, in which

he dressed himself as a Jew, and gave me this slave's dress, in which I was led away in mistake for the slut. He was an honest fellow, and— But there he stands !

HENRY (*aside*). Tear the hag to tatters !

JERONIMUS. Great heavens ! so it was you, you, you hound——

EPHRAIM. Yes, yes ; I recognise him now. It was he who got the young lady.

HENRY (*kneeling*). Ah, Herr Jeronimus, do not be angry !

JERONIMUS. You ! You shall be flogged and imprisoned. Where is the drab ?

LEANDER. She is in my hands, and never shall she be torn from them. My father shall see her, to convince him that she is no light-o'-love, but a lady of distinction. Her father was a wealthy man, in whose absence she was carried off and enslaved four years ago.

ELVIRA. And her father's name ?

LEANDER. Was Pandolfus, and he was killed in the war. Whether you, dear aunt, may be her mother—whose name was Elvira—I cannot say.

ELVIRA. Heavens ! she is my daughter !

HENRY (*aside, rising up*). She is the devil himself.

JERONIMUS. What ! Is she your daughter ?

ELVIRA. Yes. Let me straightway embrace her !

LEANDER. Henry, conduct her here immediately.

[HENRY *hurries out and leads her in*.

ELVIRA. Do you not recognise me, my daughter ?

HYACINTHE. Ah ! my dearest mother, how came you here ? *[They embrace.]*

JEW. This is all very comforting, but I want my cash.

OFFICER. Want your balderdash ! *[To HENRY.]*
You must give up the money.

HENRY. I have carefully kept it.

OFFICER'S WIFE. Then keep it still, boy !

OFFICER. But, dear woman, it was my money.

JEW. Ay, and it was my goods.

OFFICER'S WIFE *(lashing her husband with the whip)*.
There's for your money !

[THUNDERTON runs out, roaring.]

[Lashing the JEW with the whip.] And there's for your goods !

[JEW runs out, screaming, "Woe ! lack-a-day !" pursued by the LADY.]

ELVIRA. Let us away ! We shall rejoice together, and finish the story by the long-planned marriage !

III
SCATTERBRAINS
(DEN STUNDESLØSE)

A Comedy in Three Acts

FIRST PERFORMANCE

1726

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

HOWLER (*Scatterbrains*)
LEONORA, *his daughter*
MAGDALEN, *his housekeeper*
PERNILLA, *his maidservant*
ANNE, *his kitchen-maid*
LEONARD, *his brother*
LARS INKSTAND
CHRISTOPHER PENKNIFE
JENS LEDGER
CHRISTIAN BLOTTER
ERIK MADSEN, *an accountant*¹
PETER MADSEN, *his son*
LEANDER, *Leonora's lover*
CORFITZ, *Leander's uncle*
OLDFUX, *a man about town, friend of Leander's*
A BARBER
A PEASANT
A TAILOR
A NOTARY

SCENE

☛ COPENHAGEN, IN HOWLER'S HOUSE

¹ As he and his son give instruction in book-keeping, they are throughout the play called indifferently—accountants, bookkeepers, pedants, schoolmasters, ushers.

SCATTERBRAINS

ACT I

SCENE 1

PERNILLA (*alone*).

PERNILLA. Many are the comedies that have been written in this world, yet not one of them has held up a Scatterbrains to ridicule.¹ If any one chooses the subject, I can supply him with admirable materials in the vagaries of my master, Mr. Howler. It may be said there are very few scatterbrains about; but crowds of such triflers are to be found in this very country, who madly busy themselves about nothing. On the other hand, there are many men who carry a score of different designs in their heads at the same time, and yet appear to be quite unoccupied. I remember travelling with my mistress in the country long ago, and putting up at the house of a woman who was anxious to entertain us; but what an unconscionable fuss she made about it! Now she was in the cellar, now in the attic; now calling for the maid, now bawling for the boy. We asked her

¹ See note at the end of this play.

twenty times not to put herself out for us, as we should be satisfied with bread-and-butter ; but in reply she mopped her face, and begged us to wait half-an-hour. At length the table was laid and the breakfast brought in, and after these portentous preparations I fully expected a pasty as the first dish ; but the meal consisted of stirabout and hard-boiled eggs. This was not much ; still it was something. If Howler, with all his hubbub, could produce even an egg, his case would not be so marvellous as it is. If he could drive cold or scurvy from our doors, it would be something. The old miser who, on a winter's day, carried logs of wood up and downstairs till he was so warm that he did not need a fire, gained a definite object ; but Howler toils at what is, and must always remain, Nothing. The only person in the house he praises for industry is myself ; yet no one does less, though I always seem busy. Some one asked him yesterday how many persons he employed, and he answered : " Only one, who is my housemaid, cook, chambermaid, secretary, housekeeper, and wife." The last item is not true. I am no coyer than other people, but I really have not time for marriage, and I never appear prettier in his eyes than when I have a pen behind my ear. But here comes the housekeeper.

SCENE 2

MAGDALEN. PERNILLA.

MAGDALEN (*to herself*). May devils seize upon these hateful clerks !

PERNILLA (*aside*). Always railing at some one !
(*Aloud.*) What is wrong, miss ?

MAGDALEN. I looked just now through a chink into the office where the master supposes the four clerks are writing, but, will you believe it, the rogues are drinking Spanish wine ! As I peeped in, one of them raised his glass and said, "Magdalen's health, and may the old organ soon be married !"

PERNILLA. Ha, ha, ha !

MAGDALEN. Thank God, I'm not so old that they have the right to call me an old organ.

PERNILLA. I should think not, indeed.

MAGDALEN. Why, I'm not nearly forty.

PERNILLA. How can that be called old ? Maid-servants serve till they are fifty.

MAGDALEN. Besides, I carry my age well. I've not got a wrinkle yet.

PERNILLA. Oh, you've still got a good, serviceable carcass ; it would be a sin to deny it. But it's not for your face or figure they hate you, but because you sometimes complain of them to the master.

MAGDALEN. That's the truth. It is for my honesty I suffer such insults. They persuade the master they are slaving themselves to death at their business ;

and they roar for higher pay, though they now receive double what they deserve. More than that, he never has the smallest sum in his pocket without their succeeding somehow in laying hold of part of it ; so that he'll end by being a beggar.

PERNILLA. O Lord, don't say that ! The master has too many eyes in his head, and looks too sharply after the house, to be swindled in that way.

MAGDALEN. It's just because he is so busy and industrious that he will be left in the lurch. Whenever I wish to warn him against the clerks' bad faith, some trumpery affair prevents him from being able to listen to me. But for one thing, I should have left the house long ago.

PERNILLA. What is that ?

MAGDALEN. He has promised to get me a husband. But this accursed business, always cropping up at the critical moment, has prevented him from doing so.

PERNILLA. He has no time to get married himself, much less get his housekeeper married.

MAGDALEN (*weeping bitterly*). I might have been married long ago, but that I relied on his promise.

PERNILLA. I know ; you can't pop the question yourself. I wish to heaven it was the fashion. I should not, my word, have gone single so long as I have done.

MAGDALEN. Of course not. Madame Coupler¹ has sent to me several times for permission to get me a

¹ In the original, *Giftekniv*. "Coupler, a matchmaker," is one of the characters of Vanbrugh's comedy, *The Relapse*.

good husband, but I have always relied on the master's promise.

PERNILLA. You must take the reins in your own hands, and drive the master into a corner, when you find him disengaged.

MAGDALEN. Find him disengaged, Pernilla? If some party would only turn up at that moment, while he had the matter in his mind! Ah, this accursed business! But why is it that some men are such scatterbrains?

PERNILLA. I don't know. But as those who are born on July nights always see ghosts, and those born in wet weather are always whining, I suppose that scatterbrains must be born in offices or on mail-day.

MAGDALEN. What nonsense!

PERNILLA. Well, that's my belief, which some people share. I have often seen the master sitting perfectly still; but the moment any one mentions either "letters" or "business," he gets just like Don Quixote when any one uttered the word "knight-errant" in his hearing. There must be a quantity of excitable humour in his stomach, which ferments when he looks at paper. Or else it is ink, and not blood, that runs in his veins.

MAGDALEN. Whatever the liquid, I am the sufferer, and my welfare is trifled with by this scatterbrains.

PERNILLA. His own daughter's welfare is trifled with also. He has promised to get her a husband

one hundred times, and one hundred times he has forgotten all about it. Mr. Leander, who has been in love with her a whole year, has now no opportunity to talk to her.

MAGDALEN. Have Leander and our young lady settled the matter between them ?

PERNILLA. Certainly, as you will presently discover.

SCENE 3

LEONORA. PERNILLA. MAGDALEN.

LEONORA. Where is the housekeeper ? My father wants her.

MAGDALEN. Then I must be off. *[Exit.*

PERNILLA. And it is just as well that you must. Now we can talk together about some one.

LEONORA. Ah, Pernilla, I rely altogether on your promptitude and the credit you have with my father.

PERNILLA. I really think something may come off to-day, for somehow the master seems to have less to do than usual. I have settled for nine o'clock with Leander, and I hope he may manage to have a quarter of an hour's talk with the master. This was the only time there was a chance of it.

LEONORA. I hope, too, that when my father sees his person, and hears of his position and wealth, the matter will not be so difficult.

PERNILLA. Quite so, miss ; but the real difficulty is to find a disengaged hour. But I hear him coming. It is best for you to retire.

SCENE 4

PERNILLA. *HOWLER, in his dressing-gown, followed by FOUR CLERKS, each with a pen behind his ear.*

HOWLER (walks backwards and forwards, gazing on a roll of papers, and shouts). Lars Inkstand !

LARS (*running to him*). Yes, sir.

HOWLER (moving to the other side). Lars Inkstand !

LARS. Here I am, sir !

HOWLER (moving to the other side, and staring at vacancy). Christopher Penknife !

CHRISTOPHER (*running to him*). What orders, sir ?

HOWLER. What do you want ? Don't you see I am occupied ?

CHRISTOPHER. You called me, sir.

HOWLER. It is false ! Just wait until I call you. Where is Jens Ledger ? He is not present.

CHRISTOPHER. Yes, he is, sir.

HOWLER. Jens Ledger !

JENS (*running*). Here I am, sir.

HOWLER (moving to the other side, still gazing vacantly). Jens Ledger !

JENS (*running to him*). What are your orders, sir ?

HOWLER. Have you made a fair copy of last week's expenditure ?

JENS. Yes, sir ; here it is.

HOWLER. Have you compared it with the corrected copy ?

JENS. Yes, sir ; I and Christian Blotter compared it this morning by candle-light.

HOWLER. You compared it as well as you did last time, I suppose. I dare not let anything pass now, without going through it myself.—What are you doing there, Pernilla ?

PERNILLA. I am sitting here, making pens for the clerks.

HOWLER. You do well.—I get more assistance from this girl than from all you good-for-nothings. Only stand up a little ; I must sit and compare.—Christian Blotter, you read ; you read distinctly.

CHRISTIAN (*reads*). “ 24th instant : paid 14s. 3d. for the master’s brown coat. Same date, 1s. 10d. for Pernilla’s slippers.”

PERNILLA. That is true ; and I quite forgot to thank you for them, sir. I thank you much, and I shall wear them in memory of you.

HOWLER. You can thank me another time, Pernilla, not when I am sitting at my business. We might have got on a little farther but for your silly interruption.—Read on !

CHRISTIAN. “ For 4 lbs. of veal, 1s. 4d. ; 4 quarts of milk, 5½d. ; gratuity for the present of a cask of rotten pears, 5½d. ; sum total, 2s. 3d. 1 lb. coffee beans, 4s. 5d. ; carriage of tea, one penny ; a string for the young lady’s lute, three-halfpence.”

HOWLER. Stop ! Read it over again. What follows after the penny for the tea ?

CHRISTIAN. Three-halfpence for the lute-string.

HOWLER. To the devil with your copying and comparing ! After the penny for the tea should come : “ Alms to a beggar, one halfpenny.”

PERNILLA. Such an omission is shameful, and makes the whole account wrong.

HOWLER. You may well say so, Pernilla. Did an unhappy man ever have four such clerks ! Instead of helping me in my business, they are millstones about my neck.—Write it all over again, you block-heads, each one his own copy, and we may perhaps at last get the account correct.

PERNILLA. Will you not take tea, sir ?

HOWLER. Pray, have I time for eating and drinking ? I have now two letters to write. Writing a letter is looked on as a trifle by those who have never tried their hand at it ; yet one has to bethink him all at once of paper, pen, ink, a candle, a seal. It is maddening to think of !

PERNILLA. You forgot, sir, to include sealing-wax.

HOWLER. True, Pernilla ; the list is endless.—Now, you fellows there, are you writing ?

CLERKS. Yes, sir.

HOWLER. Where are all my writing materials, Pernilla ?

PERNILLA (*hurries round the room*). Here is paper—here is sealing-wax—here is a seal.

HOWLER. I certainly could not dispense with this girl, for she has the bump of locality. [*He sits down and begins to write, but rises up almost immediately.*] Pernilla !

PERNILLA. Sir !

HOWLER. Have the fowls had any food to-day ?

PERNILLA. No ; you give it to them yourself.

HOWLER. Where is the cheese-rind I cut up yesterday ?

PERNILLA. In the drawer there.

HOWLER (*throwing the rind out of the window*).
Chuck-a-chuck, chuck, chuck !

SCENE 5

LEANDER. THE FOREGOING.

PERNILLA (*to LEANDER*). Now, go right up to him before he begins writing again. That's it—to him !

LEANDER. I make my best apologies, sir, for intruding ; but I would speak to you about a matter of the greatest importance both to you and to me.

HOWLER. What is it ? Please put the matter in the fewest words possible, for my time is fully occupied.

{ LEANDER. I am the son of Jeronimus Christophersen.

HOWLER. I know Mr. Jeronimus. You have an excellent man for father.

LEANDER. I come by my father's advice and wish——

HOWLER (*to the CLERKS*). Are you writing there, you loons ?

CLERKS. Yes, sir.

HOWLER. Let me see how far you have got.—
Pardon, sir, one moment.

[Goes to the CLERKS' table.]

SCENE 6

A BARBER. THE FOREGOING.

BARBER.¹ I have been twice here to-day already
to shave you, sir, but you were not up.

HOWLER. Yes, barber. Now be as quick as possible, for my hands are full of business.

[Sits down, and the BARBER begins.]

BARBER (*amongst other nonsense says*). Unpleasant weather to-day !

HOWLER. So I observe.

BARBER. I really don't know what the world is coming to. The longer one lives, the worse it gets. One hears of nothing but what is bad. Have you heard, sir, what has happened this very day ?

HOWLER. No ; I have heard no news, and I have no time to ask for news. I am so busy with my own affairs that I have no time to speak to an honest man.

BARBER. Then I shall tell it to your honour. A sailor's wife in Newtown has brought forth thirty-two children at one birth, although beforehand she was no stouter than other women in her condition. Can you conceive that ?

¹ The Barber speaks in German.

HOWLER. I shall not trouble myself to conceive it, for I must first learn whether it be true.

BARBER. It is as true as I stand here ! I can tell you all the circumstances, for the children were all baptized, but died immediately afterwards.

SCENE 7

A COUNTRYMAN. THE FOREGOING.

COUNTRYMAN. Good-morning, master. I have to pay you for 2 lbs. barley and a pig.

HOWLER (*breaking away from the BARBER, with his face covered with soap*). You are down for 3 lbs. barley.

COUNTRYMAN. That's right ; but master will let me off the odd pound this year. The times are worse for us than ever they were.

HOWLER. That is the old story. You always grumble.

COUNTRYMAN. Yes, master ; those like us that have high-lying land won't make much this year. The corn won't sprout. Devil seize me if we don't have even less corn this year than last. And it is short, too, and only fetches 4s. 6d. the half-quarter in the market. Does not master know the fixed price of corn this year ?

HOWLER. No, I do not ; but you pay me for the three pounds !

COUNTRYMAN. Ah, I will indeed, good master—

I will indeed ; but if master will have patience with me this year, I shall strive like an honest man to pay both rates and taxes.

HOWLER. You make the same promise every year, and the payment is just as far off as ever.

COUNTRYMAN. God help us, master, when the scab comes among our cattle and disables our horses, and we have to hire our neighbours' horses to plough the ground !

[Takes some money from a handkerchief, which HOWLER begins to count.]

SCENE 8

A TAILOR. THE FOREGOING.

TAILOR. You desired, sir, I should take your measure for clothing.

HOWLER *(runs towards TAILOR, leaving the money he was counting)*. It never rains but it pours !

TAILOR. It shall be done in a twinkling, sir.

COUNTRYMAN. The money was right for 2 lbs. barley, master ?

HOWLER *(runs back towards COUNTRYMAN)*. I have not been able to count all the money. So much falls on one's shoulders all of a sudden that it is enough to drive one mad.

[Begins counting the money again.]

BARBER. Do you wish, sir, that I should come back again and finish my job ?

HOWLER. Oh, I have been shaved. [*Touches his chin, and feels the soap.*] Hullo, the soap has dried on my face. Have a moment's patience while I am shaved. [*Sits down, and says*] Ah, God help us all ! There's more to be done here than I can do.—Are you writing, over there ?

CLERKS. Yes, sir.

PERNILLA. Dear sir, will you not speak a word with this strange gentleman who has waited so long ?

HOWLER. Oh, good gracious ! that is true. Away with you others, and come again in an hour.

SCENE 9

HOWLER. LEANDER. PERNILLA. THE CLERKS.

HOWLER. Your pardon, sir, for keeping you so long. You can see yourself how overwhelmed I am with work. How can I oblige you ?

LEANDER. I am the son of Jeronimus Christophersen, sir, and I come by my father's wish to ask for the hand of your daughter, to whom I have been attached for a considerable time. My father would have done himself the honour of calling on you and making this request, but a slight indisposition prevented him.

HOWLER. Sir, I thank you for your kind offer ; but I must take the liberty of inquiring to what pursuits you have applied yourself.

LEANDER. My father has spared no pains on my

education. He sent me to travel abroad, and had me taught the accomplishments of a gentleman, and instructed in several languages besides Latin.

HOWLER. So far, so good ; but I wish much for a son-in-law who is industrious, writes a good hand, and can give me assistance in my business.

LEANDER. So far as that is concerned, I can prove what I can do by some letters I have in my pocket, if you will permit me to show them to you.

HOWLER (*to CLERKS*). Are you writing anything there ?

CLERKS. Yes, sir.

HOWLER. Let me see how far you have got.

[*Goes to their table, and comes back to LEANDER.*]

LEANDER. Here, sir, are some letters, both French and Latin.

HOWLER. No, sir, that is not what I mean. Do you understand bookkeeping ?

LEANDER. Oh no ! Of what use would it be to me ?

HOWLER. But it would be of use to *me*. Other kinds of writing are of no service to me. My daughter must marry a good bookkeeper ; and as you, sir, do not understand bookkeeping, I trust you will not be offended at my declining your offer.

LEANDER. I would willingly apply myself to bookkeeping for the sake of your daughter, to whom I am much attached.

HOWLER. What, sir ? Bookkeeping is a subject which must be studied from childhood up. More-

over, I have half promised my daughter to Peter, the eldest son of Erik Madsen, the bookkeeper, a virtuous young man who follows in his good father's footsteps.

LEANDER. I am certain your daughter will never consent to take such a pedant; and I am lost in astonishment to find that you are willing to give her to such a creature.

HOWLER. I thought as much. You dandies call all virtuous and learned people pedants. He is just the person to relieve me from the vast accumulation of business by which I am overwhelmed.

LEANDER. I cannot understand what business a man can have who has no employment.

HOWLER. I have so much business that I have no time for eating and drinking.—Pernilla! He says I have no business. You can give evidence on that point.

PERNILLA. My master has ten men's work. It is only his enemies who say he has no work. In addition to myself, he keeps four clerks, which is sufficient proof that he has work.

HOWLER. And I am on the point of employing two more.—Are you writing anything there, you fellows?

CLERKS. Yes; we are writing as hard as we can.

LEANDER. Sir, I beg to assure you that your daughter will never marry that pedant.

HOWLER. And who the devil will stop the marriage?

LEANDER. I will stop it; your daughter will stop it.

HOWLER. This is rare !

LEANDER. I can assure you, sir, that nothing will come of it.

HOWLER. And I can assure you, sir, that she shall marry Peter Madsen before the sun sets to-day. Adieu, sir ! I have no leisure for further discussion with you. *[Exit LEANDER.*

Have you ever heard the like of that fellow, Pernilla ?

PERNILLA. I know this, that had he been wanting in respect to you, sir, I should have given him a slap across the mouth.

HOWLER. A fellow to dictate to me whom I am to marry my daughter to ! A fellow who despises a bookkeeper ! Great as is the amount of business I have to get through, I must make time to say a few words to my daughter.—Leonora ! come here !

SCENE 10

LEONORA. HOWLER. PERNILLA. CLERKS.

HOWLER. However overwhelmed with work, my dear, your welfare is ever present in my thoughts.

LEONORA. Thanks, my dear father.

HOWLER. It is my intention to have you married——

LEONORA. I thank you——

HOWLER. And that to a fine, intelligent fellow.

LEONORA. I am sure that you would not give me to any but a proper person.

HOWLER. And I wish you to be married this afternoon.

LEONORA. Just as you wish, sir.

HOWLER. I did not consult you before I arranged for your marriage, because I felt certain of your obedience to my wishes.

LEONORA. My dear father, I am getting the very person I love most.

HOWLER. He is the gentleman I named to you yesterday afternoon.

LEONORA. Oh no ; you said nothing about him yesterday.

HOWLER. You have forgotten, my child. I have hundreds of things in my head, yet I can remember a thing better than some of you. He is a sensible young man.

LEONORA. That he most certainly is.

HOWLER. And he has a brave father, in whose footsteps he follows.

LEONORA. That I can well believe.

HOWLER. And before four years will be the leading bookkeeper in the city.

LEONORA. What ! Leander a bookkeeper !

HOWLER. His name is not Leander, it is Peter ; and he is the son of Erik Madsen, the bookkeeper.

LEONORA. Heavens above ! I thought he was Mr. Jeronimus' son, Leander.

HOWLER. Ha, ha ! No, my child ; he is not a fit person for you. The fop was here not many minutes ago, and was very soon sent about his business.

LEONORA. Ah ! I am an unhappy girl ! Will you give me to such a pedant ?

HOWLER. Listen ! My business will not admit of my holding a longer conversation with you. Retire at once, and prepare to be married to the young bookkeeper this afternoon.

[Exit LEONORA, weeping.]

Follow her, Pernilla, and represent to her the obedience due to her father.

PERNILLA. You need not doubt that I shall be as true to you in this matter as in everything else.

[Exit.]

HOWLER. You clerks ! come into the sitting-room. We can there transact our business in peace.

[They all put their pens behind their ears and exeunt.]

SCENE 11

PERNILLA. LEONORA.

PERNILLA. Those who wish to impose on any one must first gain his confidence. If the ruler of the house is pious, his servants assume a severe and sanctimonious air, and are soon at liberty to do just as they please. If it is the great man's wont to lie abed and drink in the presence of his servants, they

soon worm themselves into his confidence. If the master's humour¹ is to make much ado about nothing, one sees the servants puffing and blowing and wiping the perspiration from their weary brows, although in reality they have been doing nothing. A sharp servant who wishes to play his master a rascally trick must first study his ways and manners carefully, and then assume them himself. In obedience to this maxim, I have made more noise and done less work to-day than anybody, and I have received in consequence more consideration than anybody. When the master grieves over his work, I mourn with him ; when he shouts, I shout ; when he mops his face, I mop mine. When, for the sake of his blessed business, he stoops to give his daughter to a bookkeeper, I promise my best assistance ; yet I have so little mind to this arrangement that if you, miss, were mad enough to accept such a fellow, you would turn me from a friend into an enemy.

LEONORA. You need not be anxious on that head.

PERNILLA. Let the booby be off and marry an inkbottle. Was he born to lie by such a young lady's side ? and were you born to be Mrs. Bookkeeper ?

LEONORA. Ah, Pernilla, I rely on you entirely.

¹ “. . . When some one peculiar quality
Doth so possess a man that it doth draw
All his affects, his spirits and his powers,
In their confusions, all to run one way,
This may be truly said to be a humour.”

—Ben Jonson, *Every Man Out of his Humour* ; Induct.

But what is your plan to bring this marriage to naught and win Leander for me ?

PERNILLA. No, no, miss ; my plan shall not be divulged until the council assembles.

LEONORA. I believe Leander and his servant will be here immediately.

PERNILLA. Would that he were come ! for this is the only time we shall have any opportunity of speaking together. I shall be in labour with doubt, and Leander's friend, Oldfux, shall deliver me. I have sent a messenger for them— But here they come.

SCENE 12

LEANDER. OLDFUX. LEONORA. PERNILLA.

LEANDER. Ah, dearest girl, I have never passed as dismal a time as since I had that hateful interview with your father.

LEONORA. Ah, Leander, the time has not passed more happily with me.

PERNILLA. Come, young people, this is no time for billing and cooing. I have a piece of machinery in my head that must be set at work.

LEONORA. Now let us hear your plan.

PERNILLA. My plan ! You don't suppose one plan will do ? My efforts are opposed by so many obstacles that I have more than once thought of throwing up the whole affair.

LEANDER. Do let us know what you have hit upon to help us.

PERNILLA. The chief point is this : Can you, sir, act the part of pedant in case of need ?

OLDFUX. I can coach him in any details he does not understand.

PERNILLA. Do you know Peter Madsen, the accountant's son ?

OLDFUX. I have often seen him in the streets.

PERNILLA. Leander must personate him, and come to the master to ask for his daughter.

OLDFUX. I have two objections to make to this plan. First, Mr. Howler has this morning spoken with Leander. Secondly, he must know the book-keeper, for he chose him for his daughter.

PERNILLA. I draw the pen through your two objections. Mr. Howler has spoken only once to Leander ; and even if he spoke to him twice, he would not remember him. A man in whose brain swarm as many schemes as there are ants in an ant-hill can recognise no one. At times he fails to recognise me. He talked some time with me yesterday, and called me Magdalen. Furthermore, Leander must dress and bear himself so that any person might mistake him for Peter. In the second place, I have managed to worm out of the master that he has never spoken with the son—only with the father. Do you say now that I have not carefully laid my plans ?

OLDFUX. So carefully that I withdraw my objec-

tions. I believe the scheme may succeed. But when the real bookkeeper comes on the scene, the cat will be out of the bag.

PERNILLA. His coming will not disclose the plot. But if Leander succeeds in his part first, it matters not a straw when the other appears.

OLDFUX. No ; the plan will never succeed unless we manage to keep the bookkeeper out.

PERNILLA. If it lay in my power to order events, we should not have so many contingencies to guard against. I cannot keep the man out, for my post is not at the door, and the porter has orders to let him in. But listen to what we must do. Leander must be here at two o'clock—which is a good hour before the pedant will arrive—and must hold the master in conversation about his daughter. While they are engaged, we must get the master involved in some unexpected tangle, so that he won't have time to attend to the real pedant when he does arrive.

OLDFUX. Do you mean that the pedant will take himself off without an answer ?

PERNILLA. He will depart well pleased.

OLDFUX. How the deuce will that be managed ?

PERNILLA. I have not said half my say. We have in the house a housekeeper mad to be married—Magdalen—whom the master has promised to provide for. Now, I shall persuade her that the bookkeeper will marry her. When he comes, I shall advise the master, who will then be in the meshes

of some new entanglement, to permit my young mistress to come down and entertain the book-keeper. But instead of the young lady, I shall bring down Magdalen, who will suppose that the pedant wishes to marry her.

OLDFUX. Odsbodikins ! This is too vast a scheme for a girl like you. But since Magdalen is somewhat in the sere and yellow leaf, the pedant may decline to make advances to her.

PERNILLA. If he does, so much the better. If he makes up his mind to take her—and I believe he will, for such fellows look only for pelf and property—Magdalen will get married, and the play will run all the faster and merrier. I cannot deny that I wish to see Magdalen married to the bookkeeper.

OLDFUX. Ha, ha, ha ! But I see so many difficulties before us that I fear the play won't run at all.

PERNILLA. If I can only involve the master in a complication, I doubt not of success.

OLDFUX. But to entangle him so may spoil the sport. It may delay the marriage for a little, and in the meantime he may discover the truth.

PERNILLA. A fig for your objection ! I will swear to him that Leander is lurking about to carry off his daughter—which is true—and I will advise him to hurry on the ceremony. As I am Mr. Howler's master-pilot, I will bring the disguised Leander in all haste into port, and the bookkeeper will not sail in until it is too late.

OLDFUX. I wish you all good luck, Pernilla.

PERNILLA. And do you propose to stand there twiddling your thumbs while all this is going forward ?

OLDFUX. I really don't see what there is for me to do—unless, indeed, you consent to marry me, and thus forge a triple instead of a dual alliance.

PERNILLA. Oh, but you shall have something to do. You must draw the master into difficulties and put him in the fidgets. You must come here first as a messenger from Leander, to say that he intends to prosecute the master for promising his daughter to another, in spite of the letters Leander has received from Leonora, declaring she will marry no one but him. This will curl the old man's hair, and I will advise him to write a strong letter to Leander, and at the same time to consult a lawyer whether he ought not to hurry on the marriage and treat such threats with contempt. All the help I want from you is simply to raise vexatious questions.

OLDFUX. But when the lawyer comes, he will tell the master not to trouble himself, and to take no notice of the threats.

PERNILLA. Quite so ; and therefore you must be the lawyer, and conduct yourself so wildly that he cannot make head or tail of what you mean. If you can hit on any other plan of wasting his time, so much the better ; but anger and business are the levers which move the machine.

OLDFUX. An infernal machine ! My head swims

even at your description of its construction. But is there any device of which a woman is incapable ?

PERNILLA. You must be at hand, and make shift as best you can to remove any sudden difficulty that may arise ; and I shall let you and Leander know the moment you should begin your parts. You have three parts to take : first, as Leander's messenger ; secondly, as a lawyer ; and thirdly, as a barber. The master must be shaved after lunch. You must be here in an hour with all your properties. I shall conduct you to a room, and warn you when the time to enter comes. That is all you have to remember. The rest of the business falls to me.

LEANDER. But what if the machine breaks down ?

LEONORA. If it does not succeed, I shall never forgive you. Leander, I shall make away with myself rather than take that pedant.

PERNILLA. I should cut your head off, miss, rather than that you should become Madame Peter Book-keeper.

LEANDER. I thank you, Pernilla, for your zeal and fidelity.

OLDFUX. He thanks her for proposing to decapitate his dearest !

LEANDER. That was not my meaning, Oldfux.

OLDFUX. Might we not strike out Magdalen's marriage, just to curtail our difficulties ?

PERNILLA. Can you not hold your peace and remember the warning I gave you ? I will, for a

certain reason, that Magdalen shall be married to the pedant. Now, away with you !

[OLDFUX and LEANDER walk towards the door.

Nay, stay a moment ! I want to see how Leander does his part as pedant.

LEANDER. 'Pon my word, I don't know, until Oldfux instructs me.

OLDFUX. I must go in your stead, if there is any danger. Just let me see how you will bear yourself. Suppose me to be Mr. Howler, and that you have come to ask for his daughter.

LEANDER. "I come by my papa's order, to whom Mr. Howler has kindly proposed——"

OLDFUX. Bah ! are you mad ? Is this a pundit's politeness ? Why, it is the soft sawder of the drawing-room drawler ! Just pay attention to me : "I, Peter, the eldest scion of Eric Madsen's family, born at Aabenraa, am come here to-day to enlist your favour and protection for my very humble self, worthy sir, and to beg in marriage your daughter, *prima*, not *secunda*, whom you have graciously promised to my excellent father, Erik Madsen, accountant, and whom I solicit you to seal, sign, and deliver to me at sight as my dearest spouse. To your goodness alone do I ascribe this happy consummation, not to any insignificant endowment of my own ; for I recognise, when I compare my very inadequate personality with the young lady whom you permit me to approach, that I am unworthy to disconnect the ribands of her shoes. My

intrinsic value, indeed, can be no more compared with hers than a promissory note with the golden guineas. As a slate excels a slate-pencil in magnitude and importance, so do the young lady's virtue, position, and fortune overtop my virtue, my position, and my fortune. She is the slate, and I, until death, am nought but her most unworthy slate-pencil." —All the time you are speaking you must gracefully wave your right hand, and aggravate your voice so that you roar like any sucking dove.

PERNILLA. That is good enough, Oldfux, but you must not spin it out too long.

OLDFUX. Yes, yes; we can always curtail it. Come, let us go home.

[Exeunt LEANDER and OLDFUX.]

SCENE 13

LEONORA. PERNILLA.

LEONORA. I shiver and tremble when I think of all this. First, I am afraid the scheme will fall through; and secondly, I dread the backbiting of people who will declare I have taken my father in.

PERNILLA. Eh! lady! If your affection cannot stand that test, I have a simple remedy at hand. Part from Leander, and become Leonora Peter Erikson.

LEONORA. Oh no, Pernilla!

PERNILLA. Oh yes, miss. Then we shan't want all this hocus-pocus.

LEONORA. Listen to me, Pernilla !

PERNILLA. I've just been reflecting that it is a great sin to deceive your father, and that, too, for such a trifle.

LEONORA. A trifle, do you say ?

PERNILLA. It can only be a trifle when you hesitate to play a joke in order to get——

LEONORA. I have never hesitated for a moment. All I say is that——

PERNILLA. Good-bye, Leonora Bookkeeper.

LEONORA. Ah ! I shall die of sorrow !

PERNILLA. Farewell, Madam Slate !

LEONORA. If you desert me, I shall take my life !

PERNILLA. At your own request I racked my brain till I am nearly daft, and now you inform me it is a sin to use deceit !¹

LEONORA. No, I certainly do not. Help me, dearest Pernilla !

PERNILLA. Pray, is not your father renowned far and near for his scatterbrains ?

LEONORA. I did not think of that.

PERNILLA. But when our plot has been executed, may it not bring him back to his senses ?

LEONORA. Do not plague me, Pernilla !

¹ Valentine puts the case more speciously in Congreve's *Love for Love*, v. 2:—

“*Sir Sampson*. Contrivance! what, to cheat me? to cheat your father? Sirrah, could you hope to prosper?

“*Valentine*. Indeed I thought, sir, when the father endeavoured to undo the son, it was a reasonable return of nature.”

PERNILLA. Will any one stand in greater danger than I when the plot is revealed ?

LEONORA. Will you not forgive me all this, Pernilla ?

PERNILLA. Kiss my hand, then, and ask for forgiveness.

LEONORA. Ah, willingly !

[*Kisses PERNILLA's hand.*

PERNILLA. Well, now you are good again ! But here comes Magdalen, who is to open the play.

[*Exit LEONORA.*

SCENE 14

PERNILLA. MAGDALEN.

PERNILLA. Now be content, young lady, for the time of your deliverance is at hand. You are going to be married this afternoon.

MAGDALEN. What ! Is it true, Pernilla ?

PERNILLA. As true as gospel.

MAGDALEN. But to whom ?

PERNILLA. To a nice, well-to-do fellow.

MAGDALEN. Oh, how my heart beats for joy !

PERNILLA. Who understands bookkeeping.

[*MAGDALEN weeps.*

Who in fractions and arithmetic is another Alexander the Great.

[*MAGDALEN weeps.*

Who understands "one times one is one" like his prayers.

MAGDALEN. Ah, darling Pernilla, you glad my heart !

PERNILLA. Who can reckon both with slate-pencil and steel pen how many drops there are in the Kattegat. [MAGDALEN weeps again.

But the master has made him promise to help sometimes in settling his affairs.

MAGDALEN. He may well do that by day, provided only that he returns——

PERNILLA. Of course ; no one would be idiot enough to keep a man for some one else's benefit.

MAGDALEN. What kind of appearance has he ?

PERNILLA. It is so good that when I first saw him I was quite struck by him. He goes about the streets as quietly and soberly as if he was following a hearse.

MAGDALEN. But what does he shine most in ?

PERNILLA. That you will find out when you marry him. Even if he has not means, he can support you well by his slate-pencil and pen.

MAGDALEN. But I am so afraid that the master will forget all about it again.

PERNILLA. How can he ? The whole thing is cut and dried. All that is wanting is that you speak to him and say "yes." If he don't suit you, I'll take him myself.

MAGDALEN. Good-morning to you ! And the master has provided for me after all !

PERNILLA. But if he is not satisfied with you, and

thinks you somewhat too elderly, will you object to my taking him ?

MAGDALEN. How old do you think I am ?

PERNILLA. You are forty.

MAGDALEN. Well, so I thought for some time ; but lately I have made inquiries, and I find I am only thirty. I have my sainted father's word for it, and he could not lie.

PERNILLA. But it is easy to make a mistake. I am now supposed to be twenty-four ; but if I was going to be married, and made inquiries, I am certain I should find under my sainted father's hand that I am only sixteen. My sister Anne made a miscalculation, but it was the other way round. She got a lover when she was supposed to be only fourteen, and they agreed she was too young to be married. But when they looked at the book, behold, she was eighteen.

MAGDALEN. Dear, dear ! Just to think what mistakes one may make, Pernilla ! But what o'clock is he coming here ?

PERNILLA. He comes at three, and it is time for you to go up and dress. Of course, you will remember what you promised me, for it was I who persuaded the master to this.

MAGDALEN. You shall certainly have your fifty rixdollars. There's my hand on it.

[Gives her hand.

PERNILLA (*aside*). Now the play has begun. It was a charity to get the poor body a man, for I never

met any one so mad for marriage. Since age was the only hindrance to her marriage, she has risen to the occasion, and discovered, the Lord knows how, that she is only thirty. (*Aloud.*) Come now, let us go up to your chamber.

[*Exeunt.*]

ACT II

SCENE 1

HOWLER. THE FOUR CLERKS. PERNILLA.

[HOWLER enters with a pen behind his ear.¹ He is followed by the four CLERKS, each with a pen behind his ear. PERNILLA has also a pen behind her ear.]

HOWLER (*wiping the perspiration from his face*).
Pernilla !

PERNILLA. Sir !

HOWLER. I was thinking of the popinjays who say
I have nothing to do.

PERNILLA. This nonsense will turn your head.

HOWLER. I have been to Erik Madsen's.

PERNILLA. Have you indeed ? I am glad to hear
it. He promised to send his son here at three o'clock.

HOWLER. He will be here punctually.

PERNILLA. Oh, I long to see him.

¹ Howler enters the sitting-room on the ground floor, after descending from the office which was above it. The door of the kitchen was also on the ground floor, adjoining the sitting-room door.

HOWLER. And so you shall, at three o'clock.

PERNILLA. I hope he will come before then. Men who are in love are generally before their time.

HOWLER. That may be true ; but I don't wish him to come earlier, for some half-dozen letters have to be written and posted to various friends.

PERNILLA. But can they attend the wedding on so short an invitation ?

HOWLER. No ; it is merely a matter of form. I have no time for a great blow-out. There will be nothing more than the signing of the contract in the presence of a few intimate friends. But I am glad to say my daughter is now in a better frame of mind.

PERNILLA. That's a real good business. It will be well to strike whilst the iron is hot, and get the whole thing over this afternoon.

HOWLER. This afternoon the contract shall be concluded, and the fop who was here this morning may look as blue as he pleases. Pernilla, sit down at the writing-table, and assist in copying the invitations.

PERNILLA. Certainly, sir.

HOWLER. Take your scissors, fellows !

[They take them, one after the other.]

Are you ready ?

CLERKS. Yes ; the paper is cut.

HOWLER. Pens from ears !

[They simultaneously take their pens from their ears.]

Dip your pens !

[They dip them simultaneously in the ink.]

[Takes off his wig, and throws it from him.] Write !
 "As it has pleased Heaven,"—Comma ! Have you that ?

[The CLERKS write, and repeat the words aloud.]

"In its great mercy, to unite two persons,"—
 Comma ! Have you that ? *[The CLERKS repeat it.]*

"Namely, my eldest daughter, Leonora, and Mr. Peter Madsen, bookkeeper,"—Comma ! Have you that ? *[The CLERKS repeat it.]*

"It is my pleasing duty—" Why, all the hens have got into the kitchen again ! This is all through that damned kitchen-maid !

[He rushes out, and the CLERKS throw paper pellets at each other.]

[Coming back.] That fiend has not another hand's turn to do but keep the door shut, yet she will not do it. All the burden of this house falls upon my shoulders. Where did you stop ? Read out, Christian Blotter. *[CHRISTIAN reads from the beginning.]*

"It is my pleasing duty to invite you to honour by your presence the signing of the marriage contract."—Full stop ! Have you got that ? *[The CLERKS repeat it.]*

"The signing of the said contract is fixed for the 1st April, new style—" Have you got that ?

[The CLERKS repeat it.]

Full stop. Have you got that ?

[The CLERKS repeat, "Full stop."]

[Roars.] Anne !

Enter ANNE.

ANNE. What is your will, sir ?

HOWLER. Now, listen to me, Anne ! The little black hen must not be allowed to be amongst the others. They are always ill-treating her. Remember, I value that hen most of all, for since last July she has laid over forty eggs.—Christopher Penknife, get the ledger containing the returns of the hens, geese, and ducks. Look in the index, and see how many eggs the little black hen has laid this year.

[CHRISTOPHER *takes down the book and searches.*

CHRISTOPHER. Yes, that is right—forty eggs.

HOWLER. Yes, on my word, she is the best hen I have. You must therefore keep a careful eye on her, Anne.

ANNE. That I shall do, sir. [Exit ANNE.

HOWLER. How far have you got ?—Jens Ledger, read out.

[JENS *reads from the beginning.*

Parenthesis ! “ *The ceremony had to be expedited for certain reasons. Claudatur !* ” ¹ Have you got that ?

[The CLERKS *repeat it.*

“ *I live in the assurance that—* ” Is any one coming to the house ? ²

PERNILLA. Yes ; it is sure to be the bridegroom, though it is only two o'clock. Did I not say he would be here before the time ? ³

¹ i.e. *finis*, the mode in which Danish letters were then ended.

² Howler puts on his wig again.

³ It is now two o'clock P.M.

SCENE 2

LEANDER AND OLDFUX (*dressed as teachers*).

THE FOREGOING.

LEANDER (*after long salutations*). Worthy sir, patron, Mæcenæ, and benefactor ! According and like as the peacock when he looks upon his plumes feels ashamed——

[OLDFUX nudges him and whispers.

I would say, when he looks at his legs feels ashamed ; and when, on the contrary, he views his plumes, he struts and exults ; not otherwise, when I, Peter Madsen, unworthy bookkeeper——

[*The CLERKS giggle.*

HOWLER. What are you giggling at, you idiots ? You had better just compare what you have written, and see if it is all the same, while I speak with this person.

LEANDER. Not otherwise, when I contemplate and weigh my position and merits and fortune, am I ashamed like the peacock. But, on the other hand, when I contemplate and weigh my impending good fortune and good luck, I exult like him. I attribute it entirely to your goodness, worthy sir, and in no way to the value of my poor accomplishments, that you permit so insignificant a person as myself to approach so virtuous and distinguished a young lady, the ribands of whose shoes I am unworthy to

disconnect. And as the intrinsic value of a bond is in comparison to the pure metal, not otherwise——

HOWLER. Enough, enough ! You must not set so low a price on yourself. You can see from my choice what opinion I have formed of your person. I could have put my daughter in a higher position ; but as I only value virtue and industry, I have declined several considerable suitors.

LEANDER. My very best thanks.

HOWLER. Just a moment's patience. I have written a few announcements to friends in the country, as in duty bound, stating that my daughter will be married to you, sir, this afternoon. I have only to add a line or so.

LEANDER. Pray do not mention it.

HOWLER (*to CLERKS*). Where was it you stopped, you people ?—Read the last word, Lars Inkstand.

LARS. The last word was "*claudatur.*"

HOWLER. What the devil can I gather from that ?

LARS. No, sir, I was wrong. The last was, "*I live in the assurance that——*"

HOWLER. "*You will kindly be present at that time,*"—Comma ! Have you got that ?

[*The CLERKS repeat it.*

"*I remain always votre très humble et très obéissant serviteur.*"

PERNILLA. I cannot write this Latin, sir.

HOWLER. Afterwards you can look how the clerks spell it.

[*Mistaking OLDFUX for LEANDER.*] I may now for

the future look upon you as my son-in-law, and I shall call you my son ; for the affair between us is settled. Nothing remains but for you to ask my daughter.

OLDFUX. Most worthy sir, I am not——

HOWLER. I will hear no more, and I shall call you my son-in-law.

OLDFUX. Nay, but if your honour will kindly listen——

HOWLER. No ; just return the compliment, and call me father-in-law.

OLDFUX. Nay, sir, you have made a mistake. It is not I who am to marry your daughter. My name is Jonas.

HOWLER. Your pardon ; I have so much on my mind !

OLDFUX. I am Jonas Corfitzen, the bridegroom's unworthy cousin on his father's side. In book-keeping and arithmetic I am a mere boy in comparison to him. That I understand bookkeeping at all is entirely owing to his teaching, and I kiss the dust beneath his feet for it. I ought not, perhaps, to praise him, being his cousin on his father's side ; but I will say he has few peers in calculations of every description.

HOWLER. I am glad to hear you are his cousin. Were my youngest daughter but old enough, we might perhaps strike up a match between her and you.

[OLDFUX bows.

Pernilla ! bring Leonora down.—You can now

introduce yourself to my daughter. At first she seemed surprised that I should have chosen a book-keeper for her husband, but she is now quite reconciled to it. If I had ten daughters, all ten should marry bookkeepers.

LEANDER. I thank you on the part of the book-keepers.

OLDFUX. And I thank you on the part of the art.

SCENE 3

LEONORA. THE FOREGOING.

HOWLER. Now, my daughter— Go, you clerks, to the office. Compare your letters together and seal them. The addresses will be given to you presently.

[The CLERKS place their pens behind their ears, and go out.]

I am indeed glad, my daughter, that you are in a better frame of mind, that you have buried your previous attachment, and that you meet with my wishes. Young women do not look beneath the surface of affairs, and thus rush to their own destruction. I have chosen a young person for son-in-law who can support you respectably by his knowledge of business, although he does not possess a shilling.

LEONORA. My dear papa ! I do beg you will think no more of the past. I have been reasoning with

myself, and I have reflected what a sin it would be to oppose your wishes. This person suits me, and I am pleased with your choice. I am convinced you would make no arrangement for me which was not for my advantage and welfare.

HOWLER. I have too much affection for you, my child, to marry you to any one who was not suitable to you.¹ So now retire and converse together.

LEANDER. Dearest young lady, my bride to be! when I reflect on the erasures and ciphers in the account of my merits which has been generously entered in the ledger of your excellent father's thoughts, I feel ready to put up my shutters and become bankrupt. A cipher means nothing, but when preceded by a little upright stroke it means something. I am only the little stroke which means nothing, but when it is added to the young lady's cipher— [OLDFUX nudges him.] What do I say, dear young lady? I am only the cipher which means nothing; but when your stroke precedes it, straightway it becomes something.

LEONORA. You quite undervalue yourself, sir.

¹ The reader will remember that this very affectionate father, without consulting his daughter, had arranged for her marriage with an accountant *he had never seen*, merely because this gentleman understood bookkeeping by single and double entry. Argan did precisely the same thing in *Le Malade Imaginaire*, i. 5. Speaking of Dr. Thomas Diafoirus, to whom he had promised his daughter without consulting her, he says: "Je n'ai point encore vu la personne, mais on m'a dit que j'en serais content, et toi aussi, ma fille."

LEANDER. I thank you warmly.

OLDFUX. Peter, here is the ring your father gave us to wed the lady with.

LEANDER. True, Jonas.—My father sends his kindest compliments, and begs you to accept this ring from my hands as a token of my love.

LEONORA. I accept it as such, with my best thanks.

LEONARD. It is not to be looked on as an ordinary gift. It is a token of affection sanctioned by custom—a custom which originated in the fancy that, as a ring is round and has neither beginning nor ending, so——

HOWLER. One moment, pray! I'll give my life for it that the meat is being overcooked in the kitchen. *[Rushes out.]*

PERNILLA. Ha, ha, ha! On my soul, you do your part well!

OLDFUX. But sometimes there is a backwater—when Leander, for instance, talks about peacocks exulting in their legs, and about the young lady being a cipher!

LEANDER. When is all this claptrap to end?

LEONORA. So far things have gone well. I have been betrothed to you in my father's presence; but ah!——

PERNILLA. You always come in with a “but,” miss. Just leave the rest to me.

LEANDER. But if the real bookkeeper only arrives now?——

PERNILLA. And if the sky only falls now ! Please follow my advice. You have nothing whatever to do but obey my orders. I am the chief, and you the subaltern who must not argue. But the master is coming back again.

HOWLER. It is a lie, Anne ! You cannot dispute what I see with my own eyes. The plates¹ have not been scoured with ashes ; they have been scoured with sand, and simply for the reason that I forbid sand. Had I now leisure to examine the dishes and forks, I am certain they would be in no better state ; but I am only one man, and I cannot do what is beyond the power of all mankind combined. I have not eyes in the back of my head ; I have only two hands ; and I cannot be in two places at the same time. If I could but say to myself, even once in a lifetime, "Lie down and sleep in peace until dinner, for there is nothing more to be done" ! But that time has never come, and will never come to me ; for my business is like a snowball, and the farther I drive it forwards, the bigger it grows.—Who are these strangers, Pernilla ?—Do you wish to speak with me, gentlemen ?

LEANDER *and* OLDFUX. Yes.

PERNILLA. Eh, sir ? Why, this is your son-in-law and——

HOWLER. So they are !—Pardon, gentlemen. I am so full of business that I sometimes forget myself. Now, dear son-in-law, are you pleased with my

¹ The plates at this period were generally made of tin.

choice, and do you find my daughter possesses loveable qualities ?

LEANDER. Really, I am so much in love I can scarcely stand on my legs.

HOWLER. That is satisfactory. The marriage shall take place this evening.

[The engaged couple salute each other.]

PERNILLA ! what time do you think would suit best for the ceremony ?

PERNILLA. So far as I can see, sir, it cannot be performed conveniently before six o'clock. The five letters have to be compared, sealed, addressed, and sent off ; and then, goodness knows what may turn up that no one ever dreamt of. However, you are always lucky.

HOWLER. You may well say that, Pernilla.—Dear son-in-law, pray return with some of your relatives at six o'clock. I shall have no one except my brother Leonard and a notary. But I should like to consult you about a small calculation which seems to me to be difficult.

PERNILLA. Oh, sir, for goodness' sake put the question off to a more convenient occasion. The good man has something else to think of now.

HOWLER. That is true, no doubt ; but the question is a trifling one, and could be answered straight off by a person with his power of calculation.

PERNILLA. I never cross your path, sir ; but I really cannot support you in proposing arithmetical puzzles to a man who has come to be married.

HOWLER. Bah ! the question will be child's play to him. It is this : I demand 20 rixdollars for 100 tons of rye, stricken measure. How much ought I to ask for it if it was heaped measure ?

PERNILLA. Ah, sir, the other hens have got all round the little black hen, and are going to kill her !

HOWLER. Eh ? This is past endurance ! ¹

[*Rushes out.*

LEANDER. Oh, Pernilla, we are undone !

OLDFUX. Hang him, with his heaped measure and stricken measure !

LEANDER. I cannot count up to five, yet I am to be put to the test in arithmetic !

LEONORA. Now you see how things are going, Pernilla, and that the plot——

PERNILLA. Will you hold your tongue, and let me think in peace ?

LEANDER. But won't some suspicion rest on us through this ?

PERNILLA. Out through the door with you ! There is no time to think of any other contrivance.

LEANDER. But, Pernilla——

PERNILLA. Out with you all, I say ! you and that croaker ! ²

¹ The little black hen interrupts Howler's *business* as effectively as a certain lizard interrupted the lunar researches of Socrates in the *Clouds* of Aristophanes, 171.

² *i.e.*, Leonora.

SCENE 4

HOWLER. PERNILLA.

HOWLER. She wishes to persuade me there is nothing wrong with the little black hen.

PERNILLA. Oh, sir, I saw with my own eyes through the window how the others were pecking her! But it's all one to Anne—in this matter as in everything else. Had I not stopped her yesterday, we might have had a real disaster.

HOWLER. What was that?

PERNILLA. I really cannot tell you unless you promise to say nothing about it.

HOWLER. I shall make no noise about it. Tell me!

PERNILLA. Yesterday I found the "Inventory of the Household Linen" in the kitchen, and this graceless hussy wanted to grill the salmon with it.

HOWLER. I cannot possibly keep silence about this. It might have caused a real calamity.

PERNILLA. If you do not keep your promise, sir, I can never trust you again.

HOWLER. No, Pernilla; I must deal with her for this. It was a villainous transaction.

PERNILLA. I earnestly entreat you not to speak of it. She fell on her knees and begged me, with tears, not to let it out. I refused to promise until she pledged me her word she would never again lay a finger on your papers.

HOWLER. To meddle with those papers which are the apple of my eyes !

PERNILLA. Be assured, sir, this occurrence will teach her to be more careful in future.

HOWLER. If one steals my purse, I may make shift without it ; but to take my papers—as well tear my heart out !

PERNILLA. I can assure you, sir, that none of the papers are wanting or in disorder. I myself put them in their places.

HOWLER. Well, for your sake I shall be silent this time ; but for the future no one shall enter my office except you. By-the-bye, what has become of my son-in-law ?

PERNILLA. You took leave of him, sir, and asked him to come again at six o'clock.

HOWLER. That is true. One thing puts the other out of my head. Do you suppose I can remember if I lunched to-day ?

PERNILLA. No, sir. The food is still on the table.

HOWLER. Then I shall run in and have a mouthful.

[*Exit.*]

PERNILLA (*alone*). Well, this hurlyburly is done !

SCENE 5

OLDFUX (*as servant*). PERNILLA.

OLDFUX. Hallo, Pernilla ! What a hurlyburly he raised with his arithmetic and stricken measure and heaped measure !

PERNILLA. I banished stricken and heaped measures from his mind by household questions.

OLDFUX. But what did he say when he found we were gone ?

PERNILLA. He imagined that he had taken leave of you. I can get him to forget anything, if I can only drag in his business.

OLDFUX. Oh, by the Lord, I have business enough for him to do.

PERNILLA. It is a happy thing that you have, for otherwise things would look very black. Within half an hour the bookkeeper will arrive.¹ But here comes the master. Go out, and then come straight in with Leander's letter.

SCENE 6

HOWLER. PERNILLA.

PERNILLA. Have you lunched, sir ?

HOWLER. I never can get a full meal, Pernilla. Go up and find out if the clerks have the letters ready.

[OLDFUX gives a letter to PERNILLA in the doorway, and retires.

PERNILLA. A servant met me in the doorway, and gave me this letter.

HOWLER. Pernilla, when any one comes to speak with me, you should always say you will go and

¹ The time is now 2.30 P.M.

inquire if I am "at home." This is the custom in all good houses.

PERNILLA. Yes ; but some are so ill-mannered that they walk straight in. But you must not, sir, stare out of the window after them, as you generally do. Yesterday you were denied to a man ; and when I met him afterwards in the street, he said : "When your master goes out, he ought to take his head with him. I saw it in the window." Some come on important messages, and the servants may not get the opportunity of saying so.

HOWLER. Quite true, Pernilla ; but I must read the letter. [*Reads, and exclaims*] The devil ! What is all this absurd nonsense ! This Leander, who was here this morning, writes to say he hears that I have given away my daughter, who has already promised her hand to him. This he can prove from several of her letters, in which she swears to love none but him. Under such circumstances he presumes I shall not be surprised if he protests against this last betrothal, and brings the case before the Courts of Law.

PERNILLA. Eh, what does that mean ? Miss Leonora must just throw him over, saying that, as a betrothal depends on her father's consent, and as she has not been able to get his consent, the matter must be dropped. A trial in Court will be an awful business, for even if you win, an immense deal of time will be wasted over it.

HOWLER. It drives me mad to think of it. What advice do you give me ?

PERNILLA. I advise you first to write to himself, representing to him his unreasonable conduct, and thus frightening him from taking the law ; and, secondly, to consult a good lawyer.

HOWLER. Let a servant go at once for a lawyer.

PERNILLA. That shall be done ; and in the meantime you might get your letter ready. [*Exit.*]

HOWLER. Ah, I am an unhappy man ! I am drowned in business. [*Sits down to write.*]

PERNILLA (*comes in again, and says aside*). Things go well. There will be plenty more for him to do. The troubles we shall create and my own sharpness will so exhaust him that when the real bridegroom comes the master will have neither the will nor the way to converse with him. The bookkeeper may come when he pleases. He shall be united to the housekeeper, Magdalen, in the master's presence. Leander and Oldfux don't understand why I insisted on this double marriage. But they don't know that she promised me fifty rixdollars to persuade the master to provide her with a husband ; and it is only on such an opportunity as this that the master could find the time to do so.

HOWLER. No one is to be admitted but the lawyer and the barber. I must be shaved, as strangers are coming, unless I waive the wedding.

PERNILLA. I do not advise you, sir, to waive the

wedding, when the other empty-headed jackanapes is trying his level best to stop it.

HOWLER. That is true. Let it take place this evening, when I may have a little time for it. But let no one in here, that I may write my letter in peace.

PERNILLA. No one but the lawyer, the barber, and the bridegroom.

HOWLER. He won't come until the evening.

PERNILLA. I think you asked him to come here in the afternoon.

HOWLER. I really do not remember. If I did, it was a mad request.

PERNILLA. It won't matter to you, sir. He can converse with Miss Leonora, and I shall make your excuses.

HOWLER. Then I can write my letter.

PERNILLA (*apart*). Mr. Bookkeeper may now come just as soon as he pleases. I have won the game—But some one knocks. No doubt it is he.

SCENE 7

PETER MADSEN. HOWLER. PERNILLA.¹

PETER. I come according to the arrangement made by my father, Erik Madsen, accountant, and Mr. Howler, to claim your hand, beautiful young lady.

¹ It is now three o'clock P.M.

PERNILLA. You make a mistake, sir ; I am the servant. The young lady will at once have the honour of coming to meet you.

PETER. The honour is mine ; the shame is hers. But can I have a few words with the master ?

PERNILLA. Oh no, sir. He is buried beneath a load of business which kept him to-day from his meals, and he has desired me to make his apologies to you. But the matter is quite finished on his side, and nothing remains but for you to propose to the young lady herself. If you will excuse me for a moment, I shall bring her down at once. Oh, my poor master ! How sorry I am that he is plunged in all this business !

SCENE 8

MAGDALEN (*beautifully dressed*). THE FOREGOING.

PETER. I come, lovely young lady, according to the arrangement made by Mr. Howler and my worthy father, to beg you in all modesty and purity to become my wife, and to ask you if you will take me for your husband.

MAGDALEN (*curtseying*). I give you a thousand thanks.

PETER. I beg humbly you will accept this ring as a marriage token.

MAGDALEN. I give you a thousand thanks. Will you not sit down, my angel ?

PETER. No, I thank you ; I prefer to stand.

MAGDALEN. Let me beg of you to sit down, my angel. *[They sit down.]*

HOWLER. Who are talking there, Pernilla ?

PERNILLA. The bridegroom is talking to the [bride.

HOWLER. Excellent, my child ; keep your beloved in conversation until I finish my letter.

PETER. Whatever they may say about marriage, one can perceive the finger of Heaven in it. In my dreams I have seen at times a virgin of the very same form and appearance as yourself ; so we may conclude that our marriage has been long since ordained for us above.

{ PERNILLA (*aside*). Hypocrite ! It is for nothing but money that you make it.

MAGDALEN. Ah ! is it possible. The very same thing has happened to me. Once when I was saying a prayer for a happy marriage—as I often did, for one cannot do a good thing too often—a young person appeared to me who resembled you to a hair.

PETER. Forgive me, dear young lady ! May I be permitted to kiss you ?

MAGDALEN. I give you a thousand thanks.

HOWLER. Pernilla, who are talking there ?

PERNILLA. It is the bridegroom talking to the bride.

HOWLER. Good, good. Talk affectionately together, children, until I get my letter ready.

PETER. May I ask you, dear young lady, how old you are ?

MAGDALEN. Evil tongues have spread the report that I am forty, but I can give my word I am no more than thirty.

PETER. Then we are just the same age.

MAGDALEN. That is well. Children of the same age play best together.

PETER. No one ought to marry before thirty.

MAGDALEN. My word, that is true. When children marry, the housekeeping goes to the bad.

HOWLER. Who are talking there, Pernilla ?

PERNILLA. The lover and his beloved.

HOWLER. I shall be with you in a trice, children ; I have only a few more lines to write.

PERNILLA (*apart*). My conscience ! I must hit on something new !

[*Aloud.*] Monsieur, will you be good enough to step into the lady's sleeping apartment, where you can talk together more freely, without disturbing the master?

PETER. Certainly we can do so.

[*He and MAGDALEN exeunt.*]

PERNILLA (*apart*). Goodness ! he has finished his letter, and I must cough—the signal for Oldfux.

SCENE 9

OLDFUX (*dressed as a lawyer*). HOWLER. PERNILLA.

OLDFUX. I hear, sir, that you want a lawyer.

HOWLER. Yes ; but was it to you I sent my servant ?

OLDFUX. No, sir ; but the man to whom you sent is never in a condition to see clients in the afternoon.

HOWLER. Does he drink ?

OLDFUX. Yes, sir. But not a word of this to others !

HOWLER. Why did you send for such a man, Pernilla ?

PERNILLA. I didn't know he drank ; but it is just as well this man came in his place.

OLDFUX. I am quite at home in his house ; and hearing you wanted a lawyer, I took the liberty of calling on you.

HOWLER. I am obliged to you.

OLDFUX. You have some business to transact ?

HOWLER. Yes ; there is something about which I would consult you.

OLDFUX. The word "consult" has a double meaning, sir. It means both to give advice—the Latin *consulere alicui* ; or to ask advice—the Latin *consulere aliquem*.

HOWLER. Indeed ! I firmly believe all you learned

men have a screw loose. I have not sent for you to consult you about orthography, but——

OLDFUX. My good sir, what you have said does not relate to orthography. You confound orthography with syntax. Orthography is the art of spelling words correctly—an art with which I am not now concerned. I only correct your phrases. sir : *non orthographiam, sed phrases corrigo.*

HOWLER. Pardon me, but I did not send for you. You can leave whenever it is convenient to you ; for I have something else to do besides wasting the day in idle disputation.

OLDFUX. Doctors and advocates willingly offer their services, but these guilds can legally demand payment for all services rendered by their members.

HOWLER. Am I to pay you for wasting my valuable time in nonsense ?

OLDFUX. What do you desire, sir ?

HOWLER. I would ask your advice on some counts.

OLDFUX. The word “count” is now universally discarded, and employed only in the ecclesiastical courts. The Roman laws know almost nothing of it. They are divided into books, chapters, and paragraphs. If you, sir, care to study the codices, pandects, institutions, and novels, you will search vainly for the word “count.” I would rather lose my occupation than use the word “count.” But wherefore do you ask my advice ?

HOWLER. There is a person who has secretly made love to my daughter, and who possesses several

letters from her, in which she assures him of her affection. All this took place without my knowledge. I betroth my daughter to another, an excellent man's son. At first she is much excited, but she finally becomes reconciled to the person I have chosen as my son-in-law. The other gets wind of the transaction, and threatens a lawsuit, relying on her letters to him. The threats may not mean much, Mr. Advocate, but to frighten him from taking the lawsuit I have concocted a letter to him.

OLDFUX. What do you mean by the word "concocted"? It may mean "boiled" or "devised."

HOWLER. I believe Lucifer himself has visited me in the guise of a lawyer.

OLDFUX. You really must speak explicitly, sir. Do you mean you have devised a letter?

HOWLER. Yes! yes!! I have written a letter, and there it is.

OLDFUX. The letter must be skilfully written if it is intended to deter him from an action at law. Let me read it.

[Reads it.]

HOWLER. Is it strong enough?

OLDFUX. No, no, sir; we must employ other arguments. I shall dictate a letter to you which will possess greater force.

HOWLER. Ah, you will dictate a letter!

OLDFUX. If you were only up to the Spanish plan we advocates have adopted, it would shorten matters.

HOWLER. The shorter, the better. My time is valuable, for I have much to do.

OLDFUX. I am glad to hear you say so. [*Slaps him on the shoulder, and says*] Have you got that ?

HOWLER. You have said nothing.

OLDFUX. No, sir. When I slap you on the shoulder it means that you should write the person's name and title. No plan could be easier or shorter.

HOWLER. Heavens above ! what a new fashion ! But it is good enough when one understands it. I shall leave the titles blank.

OLDFUX. Good. Will you kindly write : "*Inasmuch as Mr. Leander—*" Have you got that ?

HOWLER. Yes.

OLDFUX [*whistles*]. Have you that ?

HOWLER. What do you mean ?

OLDFUX. Eh ? Sir ; when I whistle, it means a comma.

HOWLER. What infernal nonsense ! I have the comma.

OLDFUX. "*The son of Mr. Jeronimus of—*" [*Spits out.*] Tvi ! Have you that ?

HOWLER. He does not live in Thy ;¹ he lives in this city.

OLDFUX. No, sir. When I spit out and say Tvi, it means the name of the place where the opposite party lives. It is clear you do not understand the new method of dictation ; but you can learn it in no time, and use it when you dictate to your clerks.

¹ *i.e.* Thybo.

It is most useful for persons who have much business. What have you got now ?

HOWLER. "*The son of Mr. Jeronimus of this city.*"

OLDFUX. Good. [*Whistles.*] Have you that ?

HOWLER. Yes ; comma.

OLDFUX. "*Who during the past year made—*" [*Pulls HOWLER's hair.*] Have you that ?

HOWLER. Why do you pull my hair ?

OLDFUX. Eh ? It means a parenthesis.

HOWLER. To the devil with you ! [*Strikes him on the ear.*] That means a parenthetical full stop !

OLDFUX (*to PERNILLA*). You are witness to the manner in which he has treated me. I shall summons him.

HOWLER. And I shall cross-summons you.

OLDFUX. I shall prove this is the method of dictation adopted by all the eminent advocates abroad.

HOWLER. And I shall prove you to be a knave, as well as all others who use the method.

OLDFUX (*taking PERNILLA by the ear*). Bear witness !

PERNILLA (*shrieks*). Oh !

HOWLER. Will you do violence in my house, dog ?

OLDFUX. Are you a man of respectability, and yet do you not know what "bear witness" means ? Know you not that according to Roman law one takes a man by the ear and says, "bear witness," when he has to give evidence ?

HOWLER. Know you not that according to Roman

law one kicks out of the door a scoundrel who comes into honest people's houses and plays the fool ?

[*Drives OLDFUX out.*]

SCENE 10

HOWLER. PERNILLA.

HOWLER. Am I not the most unfortunate of men ? Troubles and misfortunes rain down upon me in torrents. How have I moiled and toiled all this day, and yet simply nothing has been done. There must be a multitude of evil spirits abroad, some of whom hinder men from fearing God, while others hinder them from business. Some such spirit must have rule over my house to-day, and taken in hand, when I was at my busiest, to throw stumbling-blocks in my way. The same evil spirit drove this accursed lawyer here. The day has been wantonly stolen from me. You may say, To-morrow is coming, and it will be just as long. But another day, other business. The longer the day, the heavier the business. Whither shall I away ? I might hang myself ; but the truth is, I have not time even to do that. I might take on a clever head-clerk to copy what I copy now myself.

PERNILLA. Really, the day seems to be bewitched.

HOWLER. You don't know, Pernilla, how weary I am of life.

PERNILLA. It is no wonder. You have two men's

work to do ; but that might be cleared off were it not for these confounded obstacles, one on the heels of another. You cannot right things to-day, for certain. I suspect that a certain person whom you turned off this morning has set these people on you in revenge, for— But, as I am an honest woman, here comes another millstone for your neck !

SCENE 11

OLDFUX (*as clerk, with gauze neckband and an antique wig with long pigtail*). HOWLER. PERNILLA.

OLDFUX. Pardon, worthy sir, for the liberty I take in walking straight in.¹

HOWLER. Are you accustomed to break into respectable houses without being announced.

OLDFUX. I did not venture to knock, sir, lest it might seem too bold.

HOWLER. Too bold ! Well, what is your business ?

OLDFUX. I understood that you had a great deal of business to transact.

HOWLER. And you come, therefore, to waste my time.

OLDFUX. Just the contrary, just the contrary, noble sir.

¹ Oldfux here speaks German, as the barber had previously done.

HOWLER. Such titles do not belong to me.

OLDFUX. You don't mean that, your honour.
You don't mean that.

HOWLER. Lucifer himself, I do believe, has tied another millstone round my neck.

OLDFUX. You are over-anxious, sir. Consider that I am an educated man, an educated man.

HOWLER. Then you have profited poorly by your studies.

OLDFUX. Consider, noble sir, that I understand over four-and-twenty languages.

HOWLER. There was a fellow here just now who said he understood twenty languages, but he knew nothing about them.

OLDFUX. It is not so with me. I shall not blow my own trumpet, but I am a capable man, and by birth a patrician.

HOWLER. What does "patrician" mean?

OLDFUX (*kissing PERNILLA's apron*). Your dutiful servant, gracious Fräulein.

PERNILLA. Good gracious, what titles!

OLDFUX. I humbly apologise for not greeting you before.

PERNILLA. Pray, do not mention it.

OLDFUX. The world must admit that I have unusual knowledge. Your grace will understand that a man who has gone through many courses of study at Wittenberg, Helmstad, Prag, Leipsig, Rostock, Königsberg, Nürnberg, Heidelberg, Krakau, Landau, Tübingen, Uri, Schweitz, Unterwalden,

Frankfurt-am-Main, Frankfurt-an-der-Mose, Meklenberg, Kiel, Zerbst, &c., &c., &c., must be erudite. I say, your grace will admit that one who has frequented so many universities must have acquired vast learning. Is it not true, gracious Fräulein ?

HOWLER. I find you have learnt pedantry, and that——

OLDFUX. Pardon, noble and powerful patron. Consider well that I have been connected with more than twenty-five colleges, private as well as strictly private—colleges practical, didactic, tactical, homiletical, exegetical, ethical, rhetorical, oratorical, metaphysical, chiromantical, necromantical, logical, talismanical, juridical, parasitical, political, astronomical, geometrical, arithmetical——

HOWLER. Stop ! Silence !

OLDFUX. Chronological, horoscopical, metaposcopical, physical, practical, as well as theoretical——

HOWLER. Give me my stick, Pernilla.

OLDFUX. With institutions, codices, pandects, the law of nature, law civil, municipal, feudal, *jus gentium*, *jus jusculum*,¹ and suchlike branches of knowledge——

HOWLER. My stick, I say !

OLDFUX. Let not your grace be heated. I am come with the best intentions to offer my humble services, because I understand that you have much business to transact. If I can only once set to work, you will see what a fellow I am.

¹ Soup.

HOWLER. I understand your countrymen well, and I know that if you give them an inch, they will take an ell.

OLDFUX. I shall accept for my services nothing beyond my bare expenses, for I work for honour, for honour !

HOWLER. What can you do for me ?

OLDFUX. I engage to cover a whole quire of paper with writing in ten minutes.

HOWLER. That is something indeed. You will find the paper there.

[OLDFUX *sits down, and apparently begins to write.*

HOWLER (*aside*). I am really curious to see how this will come off. I must go across and see what he is at.

OLDFUX (*meeting* HOWLER). Here it is, sir ; and you will be able to see that I have kept my promise.

HOWLER. Heaven ! what is this ? He has merely covered the paper with blots ! Where is my stick ?

[*When* HOWLER *runs for his stick, OLDFUX creeps under the table. When* HOWLER *and* PERNILLA *run towards the kitchen door, OLDFUX heaves the table on his back to the other side. On their running towards him, he overturns the table with all* HOWLER'S *papers on it, and runs away.*

SCENE 12

HOWLER. PERNILLA.

HOWLER. Ah, Pernilla, this is the finishing stroke ! Just look ! All my papers on the ground in a litter. I am not worth a straw !

PERNILLA. Oh, sir ! don't let your spirits go down. We shall get them all in order again. When I find out their proper order, I'll answer for it that not one shall be missing.

HOWLER. Oh, oh ! I am done !

PERNILLA. Ah, dear sir, just go upstairs and lie down for a little. You seem quite overdone.—Ah, the poor master !—Go, I humbly beg. In half-an-hour everything shall be in apple-pie order.

HOWLER. I must go, for I can hardly stand.

[Exit HOWLER.]

PERNILLA (*alone*). All goes beautifully. I must now to Magdalen, and summon the bookkeeper to be here with his friends at seven o'clock. By that time Leander will be well married, for I shall get the master to hurry on Leander's marriage just through fear of Leander. But when the right man comes there will be the devil's own blow-up. I must leave the house with my mistress. That Oldfux is a limb of Satan. His last performance as clerk was all extempore, and has altered the game ; for now

he need not have any truck with the bookkeeper.¹
Nothing is easier than to fool a scatterbrains, if you
only ply them with business and trouble. [*Exit.*

¹ For reasons best known to himself, Oldfux paid his third visit to Howler as a scrivener, not as a barber according to agreement. Pernilla surmises that as a barber he might have met the bookkeeper.

ACT III

SCENE 1

HOWLER (*alone*).

HOWLER. I have passed many unhappy days in this world, but never have I spent such a day as this. One-half the troubles that have befallen me might have turned the strongest brain. One fellow comes and threatens to become my son-in-law, whether I will or not ; another tweaks my hair, and calls it a " parenthesis " ; a third turns my writing-table, with all my papers, upside down. Such outrages must have been planned by some unprincipled scoundrel. Pernilla will track him out. But for this girl, I should have been utterly undone. She helps me in my business ; and I am certain that to-day's misfortunes hurt her as deeply as they hurt me. From Magdalen, on the other hand, I gain nothing. She is always marriage-mad ; and if a man is not there, ready-made for her, she is as wicked as a weasel. Would I were quit of her airs ! Would that I could marry her out of hand this evening at the same time as Leonora. But here comes my brother Leonard.

SCENE 2

HOWLER. LEONARD.

HOWLER. Good afternoon to you, brother. I took the liberty of sending a messenger for you.

LEONARD. Yes, what did that mean? You are not wont to send messengers after me. Are you unwell?

HOWLER. No; but I am ready to die of vexation. I have had this house full of crazy and unconscionable people, who came here from sheer malice to harass me and obstruct me in my business. I suspect Mr. Longtongue is at the bottom of this.

LEONARD. But what harm have you done him to drive him to such courses?

HOWLER. Perhaps because I refused to listen to a case ten miles long, full of slander and scandal.

LEONARD. But why did you refuse to listen to him?

HOWLER. I have no time for such things.

LEONARD. It is true, brother; you never have time, although you have nothing to do.

HOWLER. Don't joke, brother. Why should I keep four clerks if I have nothing to do?

LEONARD. May I ask in what your business consists?

HOWLER. Can you count the stars in the sky?

LEONARD. Well, tell me any one of the important affairs you transacted to-day.

HOWLER. From sheer stress of business I have not been able to do anything to-day.

LEONARD. I hope you will be able to say the same thing to-morrow, and the next day too.

HOWLER. I certainly succeeded in writing five invitations to the wedding, but I have been unable to send them to the post.

LEONARD. An invitation to whose wedding ?

HOWLER. My daughter Leonora will be married this evening, and it was on this account I sent for you.

LEONARD. To whom is she to be married ?

HOWLER. To Peter, eldest son of Eric Madsen, the accountant.

LEONARD. What ! Are you joking ? Your daughter to an usher, a pedant ?

HOWLER. I must have a son-in-law who can help in my business.

LEONARD. Specify some item of your business.

HOWLER. If you wish to torture me, please defer the operation to some other occasion, for to-day I can bear no more.

LEONARD. If I am to speak on your daughter's behalf, I must speak to-day, for to-morrow it will be too late.

HOWLER. What have you to say against the match ?

LEONARD. It is an insult to the whole family.

HOWLER. Is not a bookkeeper a respectable person ?

LEONARD. Not for a girl of her position and education. I am certain she will fret herself to death afterwards. I do not know the individual, but I have heard him described.

HOWLER. You are wrong, brother. My daughter is as anxious for the match as I am. She fell so much in love with him the very first time she met him, that I had no peace until I promised to arrange the marriage for to-day.

LEONARD. You could not persuade me of that were you to talk till doomsday.

HOWLER. I shall soon remove your doubts. Leonora, and Pernilla, come in !

SCENE 3

LEONORA (*dressed as a bride*). PERNILLA. HOWLER.
LEONARD.

HOWLER. Leonora, your uncle will not believe that this marriage is agreeable to you. He considers it is an insult to our family, and he has persuaded me to withdraw my consent.

[LEONORA and PERNILLA weep.]

LEONARD. I could not think that she would consent to it without coercion. See how agitated she is when she hears of her release from it.

HOWLER. Why do you weep, my child ?

LEONORA. Have I not good cause to weep ? I declare most solemnly that I will have no other husband than Peter Madsen, bookkeeper.

PERNILLA. If the match is broken off, I must leave the house.

HOWLER. Ha, ha, ha ! Hear you that, brother ?— Set your heart at rest, my daughter ; what I said was merely to try you.

PERNILLA. But why is Mr. Leonard so much against the match ?

LEONARD. Not a word more, Pernilla, since my niece is content.

LEONORA. He is a very sensible young man, dear uncle.

LEONARD. You have made a good selection, my child.

PERNILLA. If he has no means, he can support my mistress by his pen and slate-pencil.

LEONARD. We need not fear for her.

PERNILLA. His cousin Jonas says he is the best accountant in the city——

LEONARD. Enough ! enough !

PERNILLA. And he kisses the dust under his feet.

LEONARD. Be it so ! be it so !

PERNILLA. His fathers and grandfathers and great-grandfathers all taught bookkeeping, so that he has the quarterings of sixteen bookkeepers——

LEONARD. Be it so. Enough !

PERNILLA. And was cradled in science.

LEONARD. True ; she could not have made a better choice. (*Aside.*) I am so upset by this folly that I can scarcely stand. But I cannot persuade myself that all is as it should be.

HOWLER. Now, brother, you can see whether I have constrained my daughter.

LEONARD. Since father and daughter are agreed, I have not another word to say. But here come strangers. It must be the bridegroom, with the notary.¹

SCENE 4

LEANDER AND OLDFUX (*dressed as teachers*). LEANDER'S UNCLE, CORFITZ (*dressed as an old man*).
NOTARY. THE FOREGOING.

HOWLER. Welcome, my dear son-in-law.

LEANDER. I am come as arranged, and brought my cousin Jonas, a graduate in bookkeeping, and my Uncle Corfitz, with me, to witness my entry into your family. My father is not well enough to attend.

HOWLER. But this person is not your father ? He does not seem to me to be Mr. Erik Madsen himself.

¹ It is now six o'clock P.M.

CORFITZ. No ; I am the unworthy brother of his father, and come in his father's place. This young man is Jonas Corfitz, my own son.

HOWLER. Yes, yes, good people all. We shall now cut it short and sweet, for my time is limited, So now take hands.

[LEANDER and LEONORA take hands, and the rest of the company offer the usual marriage compliments.

CORFITZ. Mr. Notary, will you be good enough to enter in your book that a marriage has been completed to-day between these persons ?

NOTARY. Yes, when I get their names.

HOWLER. My daughter was born in this city, is twenty years of age, and the bridegroom——

LEANDER. I shall give him the details about myself.

[*He dictates in a low voice, and the NOTARY writes.*

CORFITZ. I can assure you, sir, that my nephew. Peter, will always be a dutiful son-in-law, and will always find it a pleasure to assist you in your business.

HOWLER. It was precisely for this reason that I preferred him before several distinguished suitors—especially one young fop, to whom she half promised herself without my knowledge. This fellow actually threatened me with an action to-day, and in consequence I hurried on the ceremony.

CORFITZ. You were perfectly right, and the gentleman will now look very blue.

PERNILLA. Ah, kind master ! I have a humble request to make.

HOWLER. What is it ? You know, Pernilla, I would do anything in my power for you, for you have always been trustworthy and honourable.

PERNILLA. No, kind sir, it is nothing for myself ; it is for poor Magdalen.

HOWLER. Would that she were far enough away ! It is no fault of mine that she is not married, but I cannot drag men by the hair to her. I have more than once tried to get a husband for her, but have always been prevented by business.

PERNILLA. If you will kindly hear me, sir—she is engaged.

HOWLER. To whom ?

PERNILLA. To one of the first undertakers in the city. We invited him here at this time to ask for your consent, if you can lay your own business aside for an hour or so.

HOWLER. That was a capital arrangement, for otherwise I should never have found time to attend to the matter.

PERNILLA. I thought we might get the business over this afternoon while the notary was here.

HOWLER. I am unspeakably glad.—Mr. Notary, will you kindly remain a few minutes longer, as we may have some further business to transact.

PERNILLA. I thought it would be more convenient to you, sir, to knock down two birds by the same stone. But here is the undertaker with his father.¹

SCENE 5

ERIK MADSEN. PETER MADSEN. THE FOREGOING.

ERIK. I come with my son, according to promise, to witness his marriage.

HOWLER (*to PERNILLA*). What does he mean by "according to promise" ?

PERNILLA. Oh, that is the way undertakers talk. These kind of folks have a lot of queer expressions, just to spin out their yarn. They have their own lingo. They call a maidservant a daughter of the house ; and when they spoke to me about you, they called you dear father, instead of master and principal.

HOWLER. Indeed ! That is curious.

PERNILLA. Yes, there is a great difference between undertakers' talk and other people's talk.

HOWLER (*to ERIK MADSEN*). I am glad to see you, sir ; and I may assure you, on the bride's behalf, that she is an excellent housekeeper.

ERIK. I do not doubt it, sir ; for good fruit only could be expected from such a goodly tree as yourself.

¹ It is now seven o'clock P.M.

HOWLER (*to* PERNILLA). What you say is quite true. The undertaker's mode of speech is very peculiar. Let Magdalen come in.

[PERNILLA *goes out to* MAGDALEN, *and then returns*.

HOWLER (*to* ERIK). It occurs to me, sir, that I have often had the honour to see you before.

ERIK (*to* PERNILLA). What does this mean, my girl? He appears not to know me, and yet he has been to my house this very day about his daughter's marriage!

PERNILLA. The master's ways are not amenable to calculation, Mr. Bookkeeper. A hundred times a day he is all in a fog, and talks like that.

ERIK. Ha, ha, ha!

HOWLER. Is Magdalen coming, Pernilla?

PERNILLA. Yes; she will be here immediately.

ERIK. Your daughter is dressing, perhaps?

HOWLER (*aside*). Still the undertakers' cant. (*Aloud*.) I suppose so. She does not care much for show, but I dare say she will be equal to the occasion.

ERIK. You, sir, do not care for show, and naturally your child would be the same.

HOWLER (*aside*). Undertakers' dialect still! (*Aloud*.) No one in this house will learn display from me.

ERIK. Yes, you told me that on a previous occasion.

HOWLER. Have I, then, lately had the honour of speaking with you?

ERIK (*aside*). Again in a mist ! (*Aloud.*) I observe that your head, sir, is always full of business.

HOWLER. That is quite true, sir. Therefore I have chosen an industrious young man for my son-in-law, who can give me material assistance.

ERIK. I thank you much.

HOWLER (*aside*). Still undertakers' slang !

PERNILLA (*to* HOWLER). Is not what I said true ? It is the mortuary manner.

HOWLER. But it implies my having met the gentleman before.

ERIK (*aside*). In the clouds again ! But his brother advances. (*Aloud.*) Here, sir, is your dear daughter.

HOWLER (*aside*). Funereal phraseology ! To the devil with it !

SCENE 6

MAGDALEN (*with bridal peruke*). THE FOREGOING.

HOWLER. Come forth, my child. It gives me very great pleasure to be able at last to marry you from my house. You are getting an excellent man, who will take care of you.

MAGDALEN. I do not doubt it, especially since——

PERNILLA. It is best to make it short and sweet, for the master has a load of business to transact to-night.

ERIK. Do you, sir, wish the marriage to be performed now ?

HOWLER. Yes, sir ; I should wish it to be so.

PERNILLA. Then join hands at once ! (*Aside.*)
These two are as lovesick as rats !

[*The bride and bridegroom take each other's hands, and then embrace. The company offer warm congratulations. The NOTARY writes, PERNILLA dictating to him in a low voice.*]

HOWLER. Adieu, Mr. Notary ; I shall settle with you to-morrow. [*Exit NOTARY.*]

If the morning was full of vexations, the afternoon is ample compensation for it. I am pleased and glad that both my daughter and housekeeper are provided for in the same hour.

ERIK (*to PERNILLA*). Did he get his housekeeper married to-day ?

PERNILLA (*pointing to LEONORA*). That is the young person there.

ERIK. She is a handsome person. Whom did she marry ?

PERNILLA. The young man standing beside her—an undertaker in the city.

[*The two married couples converse together.*]

HOWLER. I have now forgotten all my troubles.

ERIK. Yes ; the whole business has gone off well. Although the bookkeeper who has married your daughter and the undertaker who has got your

housekeeper are both small people, yet they can well support their wives. I myself, dear relative, make——

HOWLER. Why do you call me “relative.”

ERIK. I am an old-fashioned man, and I conform to the old-world habits.

HOWLER (*aside*). It must be as Pernilla says, and this is undertakers’ idiom. (*Aloud.*) I did not inquire from rudeness, but because it is not customary.

ERIK. I know, of course, that it is customary among people in society to say “Mister” on all occasions.

HOWLER. Pray do not suppose I meant to be rude.

ERIK. By no means. But I am a man who is by no means ashamed of my profession. Both I and my son can live respectably, and, what is more, lay by money every year.

HOWLER. I can well believe it. But then one year is not so good as another. The year after the plague, I suppose, was a profitable one for your profession.

ERIK (*aside*). His wits are a-woolgathering again ! (*Aloud.*) I do not at all understand what you mean.

HOWLER. I mean that so many weddings took place.

ERIK. But how are marriages connected with my profession ?

HOWLER. You are an undertaker of this city.

ERIK (*aside*). Nothing will persuade me he is right in his head. (*Aloud.*) If you say so, dear relative, from absence of mind, I pity you ; but if you are joking, you are acting improperly.

HOWLER. Keep your "relative" to yourself, in the devil's name ! Am I your relative ?

ERIK. Is not my son married to your daughter ?

PERNILLA (*aside*). Now the murder is out, but it cannot be helped.

HOWLER. I am told it is customary among you undertakers to call a maidservant "daughter," and the master of the house "relative," or brother-in-law, or what not ; but if your son is married to my housekeeper, I fail to perceive our relationship.

PERNILLA (*aside*). No weakness, Pernilla !

ERIK. What the devil do you mean by "housekeeper" ? Is your daughter your housekeeper ?

HOWLER. No ; my daughter I know, and my housekeeper I know, Mr. Undertaker.

ERIK. I am no undertaker, and he hanged to you.

HOWLER. Pernilla, he says he is not an undertaker.—But all the same you are an undertaker.

PERNILLA. Yes, sir ; he is one of the oldest undertakers in the city.

ERIK. Confound you, you jade ; you know you are lying ! My name is Erik Madsen. I am a book-keeper, and my son Peter has just been publicly married to your daughter.

HOWLER. What infernal deception is this? My head is half turned already. [*To LEANDER.*] Here, sir! Are you not the son of Erik Madsen, the bookkeeper?

LEANDER. Forgive me, dear father-in-law. My name is Leander, and I am the son of Mr. Jeronimus.

HOWLER. And you, Mr. Jonas Corfitzen? Are you not his cousin?

OLDFUX. Forgive me, my good sir! My name is Oldfux, and I am well known in this city for my practical jokes, at your service.

HOWLER. I now ask you once for all, sir, are you an undertaker of this city?

ERIK. And I answer you once for all, I am Erik Madsen, a bookkeeper.

HOWLER. And you, young man, who has married my housekeeper, are you not an undertaker, the son of an undertaker?

PETER. I am Peter the bookkeeper, who has married your daughter.

HOWLER. You must be mad. There stands Peter the bookkeeper.

LEANDER. No, sir; my name is Leander.

HOWLER. Heaven above! what does all this mean? Either I am mad, or you are all mad, or the metamorphoses of Ovid are taking place under our eyes! Listen to me, my daughter! Are you not my daughter?

LEONORA. Certainly I am, dear papa.

HOWLER. And you, Magdalen? Are you not Magdalen?

MAGDALEN. Yes, sir, I am.

HOWLER. And you, my daughter, are you not married to Peter Madsen, the bookkeeper?

LEONORA. Forgive me, dear papa. I am married to Leander, the son of Mr. Jeronimus.

HOWLER. A—h! And you, Magdalen; is it not an undertaker you are married to?

MAGDALEN. Forgive me, sir; he is a bookkeeper.

[HOWLER *sits down on a chair and meditates.*

ERIK (*to LEONARD*). Your brother, sir, has completely lost his reason. You see he cannot recognise any of us. We really ought to send for a doctor.

LEONARD. I have stood here lost in astonishment at all that has taken place. One thing I am certain of—some gross deception has been practised.

HOWLER (*rising suddenly from his chair*). I am Alexander the Great, and you are all villains who shall die by my hand.¹

[*Raises the chair aloft and runs among them.*

LEONARD (*seizes him and seats him*). My dear brother, do you not recognise me?

¹ Howler's momentary loss of his reason cannot be compared with Sir Giles Overreach's sudden madness in Massinger's comedy, *A New Way to Pay Old Debts*; although the cause was precisely the same in both cases. The scene in Massinger's comedy borders on tragedy.

HOWLER. Oh, oh, oh ! These doings have driven me crazy. You are my brother Leonard.

LEONARD. Compose yourself, my dear brother, and let us coolly examine this matter—a conspiracy, an intrigue. Listen, my dear Leonora. So far as I can see, your father wished to marry you against your will, and you have resorted to a belle's stratagem to escape from the match.

LEONORA (*kneeling*). Ah, my dearest father ! I beg with bitter tears for your forgiveness. Affection for Leander on one side, and desperation on the other, drove me to resort to these deceptions.

LEANDER (*kneeling*). Worthy father-in-law, it was I whom you turned out-of-doors so scornfully this morning. I have personated Peter Madsen, book-keeper, in order to secure a treasure which might have otherwise escaped me.

PERNILLA (*kneeling*). Worthy master, I am captain of this company of conspirators. I have spun this web of conceit, not to ridicule my master, but to rescue my mistress, who would have put an end to herself in despair, had she been compelled to accept this accountant.

OLDFUX (*kneeling*). Worthy sir, I am a well-read knight-errant. It was I who visited you this afternoon, first as an advocate and then as a clerk, in order to prevent you from speaking with Peter Madsen when he came to propose to Magdalen, who, he believed, was your daughter.

HOWLER. Ah, brother ! I will take revenge for all this, were it to cost me my life.

LEONARD. Brother, I can assure you that, had they admitted me as an accomplice, I should have warmly assisted their plans, notwithstanding my esteem for you. You must forgive these young gentlemen, and look upon the whole intrigue as the result of affection and despair. Love overcomes all obstacles to gain that which irresistibly attracts it. And what more can be said about this match than that it is ten times better and more desirable than the other ? Is not the bridegroom an honourable, worthy, and rich young man ?

HOWLER. But he does not understand either single or double entry ! I wish to have a son-in-law who is skilled in bookkeeping, and can help me in my burdensome business.

LEONARD. Listen, brother. If you take my advice you will discharge your clerks, take your forty winks at midday, and visit your friends in the afternoon. Just imagine you have nothing to do, and you will find that much more work will be done in your house.

HOWLER. What ? Pray, don't talk such nonsense. No one knows where the shoe pinches but he who wears it.

LEANDER. My dear father-in-law, if you will put away your anger, I promise to apply myself to writing and calculation, in order to be able to assist you in your business.

PERNILLA. Yes ; I shall take right good care that he does so, sir.

HOWLER. Away, you hussy ! You shall pay dearly for your tricks.

PERNILLA. If I had not felt respect for my master's house, I should have let things go their own gait. But I could not bear to see my master humbled in the dust and my young mistress driven to destruction by such a match. This was why I resorted to such means.

LEONARD. What she says is quite true. What but attachment to the family could have induced her to run the risks she has run ?

HOWLER. Will you promise me, sir, to study bookkeeping ?

LEANDER. I swear I will do so, dear father-in-law.

HOWLER. What do you advise me to do, brother ?

LEONARD. I advise and entreat you, by our brotherly affection, to forgive them all. The marriage-knot has been tied, and cannot be untied.

HOWLER. Can I be certain, sir, that you will study bookkeeping ?

LEANDER. Yes, I swear to it.

HOWLER. Then I will call you my son-in-law, and I forgive all of you for what you have done. Stand up again !
[*They rise to their feet.*]

You saw what took place, Mr. Erik Madsen. I firmly believed I was giving my daughter to your son ; but these lovelorn people have delivered him

into the hands of my housekeeper. But as she is a well-behaved person who comes from a good stock, and is not over forty years of age, there is hope for a family of little bookkeepers.

ERIK. You may keep your housekeeper and go to the devil! She shall never be my daughter-in-law.

HOWLER. We shall see about that.

ERIK. I shall take an action against you.

HOWLER. You may take an action against my maidservant and the fellow who planned the marriage; but I can give my sacred word I knew nothing about the matter.

ERIK. Ah, I am an unhappy man!

PETER. Ah, I am Peter Martyr!

MAGDALEN. Ah, my angel, do not be angry!

PETER. Eh? You go to Jericho!

MAGDALEN. I have £700 which I saved in the master's service. His own daughter won't have such a dowry.¹

PETER. On second thoughts, papa, I think I'll fall in with this marriage.

ERIK. Do as you please. Come, let us go without taking leave of these impostors.

HOWLER. Your servant, Mr. Bookkeeper. I shall

¹ This recalls the last scene of Vanbrugh's *The Confederacy*, where the old woman who supported herself by selling "paint, patches, false teeth, and all sorts of things for ladies" is discovered to be the mother of "Colonel" Dick, and saves him by handing him £10,000, to the amazement of all present.

recommend you to my son-in-law as a teacher of bookkeeping.

ERIK. Recommend the devil to him. *[Exit.*

LEANDER. Adieu, Mr. Bookkeeper !

OLDFUX. Your servant, Peter Madsen ; I wish you luck !

PERNILLA. Adieu, Mr. Bookkeeper, and good health to you !

PETER. Adieu, scoundrels all !

[The BOOKKEEPER and MAGDALEN exeunt.

NOTE

THE following remarks on comedy, by Lessing (*The Laocoon, &c.*, in "The Scott Library," p. 208), might well have been suggested by *Scatterbrains* :—

"An absent-minded person is said to be no fit subject for comedy. And why not? Absent-mindedness, it is urged, is a malady, a misfortune, but not a vice; and an absent-minded person no more deserves ridicule than one who is afflicted with the headache. Comedy, we are told, must only deal with such faults as can be remedied; but a man who is absent-minded by nature can no more be cured by means of ridicule than one who limps. . . .

"But is absent-mindedness to be looked upon as a natural shortcoming rather than as a bad habit? I cannot think so. . . . Yet even if we grant that it is incurable, what authority have we for supposing that comedy should only laugh at moral defects, at faults that may be cured? Every absurdity is laughable, . . . but laughter and derision are far apart. We can laugh at a man, occasionally laugh about him, without in the least deriding him. . . . We may laugh at the Misanthrope of Moliere, but the Misanthrope does not thereby become con-

temptible ; he remains what he was, and the laughter arising from the situations in which the poet places him does not in the least lower him in our esteem."

"So long as a man rides his hobby-horse peaceably and quietly along the king's highway," says Sterne in *Tristram Shandy*, "and neither compels you or me to get up behind him, pray, sir, what have either you or I to do with it?" Nothing whatever ; but Howler and Argan in the *Malade Imaginaire* insisted upon their daughters mounting behind them, and caused such discomfort and distress to these unhappy young ladies that the bystanders were forced to interfere.

